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MISSION FOCUSED

IN THIS ISSUE: This issue explores what it means to be Mission Focused as research administrators. We facilitate our faculty's endeavors in pursuing research. We know how to get things moving forward in the right direction, despite any obstacles, and completing any necessary tasks along the way. We are a part of the process to help our faculty be successful and to assist our institutions achieve their missions.

In this issue, we have the opportunity to reflect and share best practices about how we achieve our goals to stay Mission Focused. Research administration allows for creativity, while being disciplined and following specific agency rules or guidelines. We stay the course and focus on the mission to be accomplished.

This issue debuts a new column for 2022 that focuses on collaborations. Denise Moody and Sherry Sawyer of the Boston VA Research Institute write about the creation of the NIH All of Us Research Program and the agency’s partnership with organizations of all types to build a diverse health database. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has partnered with NIH to ensure veterans are represented in this research effort. Stay tuned this year as this new feature of collaborators shares valuable insights.

In another approach to Mission Focused, spotlighted in the Clinical/Medical track, Brian J. Sevier and Chris Peters both of University of Florida, share their article “The Ultimate Mission for the Ultimate Customer,” which emphasizes that being patient focused equals being Mission Focused. Read this article to learn about the mission focus in clinical trials.

Tracy Gatlin of Montana State University also touches on the idea of customer service as part of a research administrator’s mission. Her article, “A Central office Approach to Fostering Researcher Relations and Mission Success through Customer Service,” explores opportunities to foster positive relationships between Central Office Research Administrators, Principals Investigators, and Departmental Research Administrators. Tracy suggests using targeted follow-up actions and providing proactive responses to help foster relationships between PIs and research administrators while enhancing your approach to customer service.

We hope these perspectives about what it means to be Mission Focused as a research administrator inspire you to think about why you do the work you do!
The theme of this issue of the *NCURA Magazine* is Mission Focused. How relevant and appropriate! Research administration is the embodiment of “mission focused” and research administrators are the classic practitioners. A quick look at most of our institutional mission statements we find research listed as a main mission with statements such as “advancement and sharing of knowledge; focused on problem solving, leadership and service to the community; in a culture of inclusion from all backgrounds; conducted in ethical manner.” Our colleagues across the globe are the facilitators of these missions, facilitating the research by assisting the researchers with the multitude of administrative and regulatory requirements, reducing their administrative burdens, and ensuring successful receipt and management of funding. We do this while abiding by the institutional values of ethics, integrity, service, and inclusion.

I believe NCURA’s motto of “Supporting Research...together” captures the essence of who we are. Our community is more than happy to not only use our knowledge and expertise to support our researchers but also share with each other. This is evident by the success of our conferences (FRA, PRA, Regional and Annual Meetings), workshops, webinars, and other professional development resources, in which our members share their knowledge and expertise on how to successfully achieve our mission and navigate the many obstacles along the way. Over the past two years research administrators have demonstrated not only their incredible abilities to adapt to the changing work environment but continue to focus on their mission and support their researchers under extraordinary circumstances. We have used collective knowledge, creativity, and collaborative approaches to develop new procedures to address significant changes in the regulatory and disclosure requirements with the focus on ensuring the faculty and institutions meet their obligations.

At its February 2022 meeting, the NCURA Board of Directors heard from the Chairs of the Select Committee on Peer Programs/Peer Review and the Select Committee on Global Affairs on how their respective committees utilize the expertise of the members to help identify best practices, many of which are shared in the Notable Practices column of *NCURA Magazine*. As you will see in the Board updates, as an organization, both regionally and nationally, we continue to thrive by staying focused on our mission of supporting our global membership and developing innovative programs to enhance research administration as a profession.

Maya Angelou is quoted as saying “My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive,” I think if we can agree that it is what we too do!

Warm regards,

Ara

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*Ara Tahmassian, PhD, is the 2022 NCURA President and Chief Research Compliance Officer at Harvard University. He can be reached at ara_tahmassian@harvard.edu.*
Over the course of the 2021 calendar year, research activities continued despite numerous challenges. I’ve personally witnessed first-hand the resiliency of researchers and research administrators at two institutions during the global pandemic. We navigated the impact of COVID-19, all while taking necessary precautions and safely repopulating our campuses. Research administration and compliance offices made necessary changes in their operation and delivery of services due to the transition to remote and hybrid work. Despite those challenges, researchers, educators, and scholars across the world continued to conduct impactful research and scholarship. And as always, research administration and compliance professionals across the country were there to support the research mission. In-person interactions were limited, and research administration and compliance offices implemented creative approaches to continuing activities and managing risk.

During this same time period new areas of compliance concerns continued to grow. The impact of undue foreign influence in research, particularly at universities, increased as a concern for U.S. federal officials and university administrators. The U.S. Government continued to take steps to oversee and protect U.S. research investments from undue foreign influence by those believed to be seeking to compromise U.S. national and economic security. This resulted in the identification of new risks to academia, and increased regulations and oversight, as well as investigations into our faculty. Our resilience in fulfilling our respective missions has indeed been tested, requiring institutions to balance compliance versus mission. And we were up for the challenge. The key to success, like everything else in life, is maintaining balance—indeed being mission-focused requires a careful and thoughtful approach. The key to striking that balance was risk management. Many institutions attempted to balance the protection of academic freedom, their overall mission, and U.S. national security interests and related risks. International engagement and collaboration are integral to our education and research missions. That is why many organizations embarked upon a risk-based approach to preserve these critical relationships while also safeguarding the students, faculty, and professional staff.

Is risk management foundational to creating the balance that enables institutions to be mission-focused? At a minimum, risk management is necessary.
programs include identifying, analyzing, prioritizing, mitigating, and monitoring risks while keeping in mind the organization’s mission. To test whether or not risk management is the key to mission focus, let’s briefly explore how we addressed the impact of undue foreign influence.

1. **We reaffirmed our mission.**
   In many cases our first move was to send messages from university leadership to our academic communities reaffirming our mission and clearly communicating our commitment to international collaboration, interdisciplinary research, and the global exchange of ideas. Those communications also included a commitment to ensuring compliance with federal sponsor policies and guidelines and protecting our intellectual property. A mission defines an organization’s purpose, culture, and values. Organizations that clearly state their mission or purpose, and activate organizational values to support it, provide clarity and direction for the risk management process. This clarity was essential in helping universities navigate foreign influence concerns while achieving their missions.

2. **We identified the risks.**
   To understand exactly what we were dealing with, research administration leaders and staff needed to identify the risks associated with U.S. concerns of foreign influence. We were assisted by federal sponsors such as NIH and NSF, who quickly identified their concerns to academic institutions. We developed relationships with and received briefings from the FBI and Homeland Security, while leveraging peer institutions and professional organizations such as the AAU, APLU, and COGR to identify the risk environment surrounding international engagement and foreign influence.

3. **We analyzed the risks.**
   Once a risk was identified, it needed to be analyzed. And that’s exactly what many research administration and compliance offices did, often leading the analysis for their institutions. In order to protect our institutions, we performed risk assessments of our internal control environments to identify vulnerabilities to these new risks and concerns. This required assessing conflict of commitment and conflict of interest disclosure requirements, intellectual property processes and policies, cybersecurity, and export control compliance to name a few.

4. **We prioritized the risks.**
   Once we assessed the related risks, prioritization was required. We briefed university leadership, created committees, and assembled task force teams to prioritize the risks. Whether we used a more formal approach, such as a control matrix, or something more informal, we ranked each risk by factoring in its likelihood of happening; the current control environment at our respective institutions; and the potential operational, financial, and reputational risks involved if realized. If your institution is like the universities I’ve worked for, the majority of your research awards come from federal sponsors. Thus, complying with federal regulations is non-negotiable and also integral to our research missions. Compliance requires resources, and those resources are not limitless. Therefore, based on the risk priorities and available resources, we designed and implemented strategies that maximized risk mitigation strategies to accept, avoid, control, transfer, or reduce those risks, based on our infrastructures and resources. Effectively treating and mitigating risk also means using resources efficiently. One key mitigation strategy is ensuring that our research communities are aware of the rules of engagement. Therefore, it was important to educate and ensure understanding and clarification of sponsor policies and procedures. This included sending broad announcements from leadership, updating and creating webpages, sending regular communications with sponsor updates from compliance and sponsored projects offices, and providing training programs.

6. **We continued to monitor the risks.**
   During risk mitigation we developed new internal controls. In some cases, we invested in the development of new positions or expertise and created new offices, tools, and technologies to facilitate effectively monitoring foreign-influence risks. We learned that clear communication throughout our organizations and with all stakeholders was and remains essential when it comes to the ongoing mitigation and monitoring of potential risks related to foreign influence. We benefited from our peer institutions and professional organizations such as NCURA, which continue to engage with our federal sponsors and create opportunities to keep us at the forefront of this dynamic regulatory environment we’re in.

In the end, we learned that effective risk management activities are both foundational and fundamental objectives that are critical elements in balancing our institutions’ mission and values. An effective compliance program recognizes and supports its institution’s mission to inspire and to communicate organizational values. We do this by demonstrating our commitment to mission in our approach, communications, policies, procedures, and risk management. While our work regarding foreign influence is far from done, we should be proud of what we learned about the effective elements of compliance management. We were able to demonstrate our contributions to our whole institutions, and we were key to helping everyone at our institutions maintain integrity while reducing risk. We can be proud to know that effective risk and compliance management is essential to our institutions achieving their missions.

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**Steps in Developing a Compliance Plan**

1. Reaffirm your mission in light of the requirement.
2. Identify the risks.
3. Analyze the risks.
4. Prioritize the risks.
5. Mitigate the risks.
6. Monitor the risks.

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Kairi Williams is the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research Administration and Compliance at UC Berkeley. The Office of Research Administration and Compliance (RAC) is the administrative office at UC, Berkeley responsible for facilitating the submission and acceptance of grant awards while ensuring campus compliance with federal, state, and university regulations. Kairi can be reached at kdw@berkeley.edu.
Of I asked you to come up with a bad customer service experience, I feel confident you could provide at least one example. What were the issues? Likely these incidents included a long wait, a rude or disinterested employee, a bare minimum response, or no solution provided at all.

We have all experienced bad, good, and occasionally great service. Current social media and communication technology platforms allow for widespread examples of poor experiences. Hopefully, most experiences fall into the good category, but how many are excellent? What defines excellence? Great customer service looks different for different people and situations; however, pillars of excellent customer service are based upon tailored service, competent staff, convenience, and proactive support (Help Scout, 2021).

At a previous job, all employees were required to complete an annual customer service training. The training was composed of short and specific lessons providing elevated actions to common situations, and to this day, some of those lessons have stuck with me. One of those retained practices is that when someone stops me to ask where a person’s office is or how to find a specific building on our campus, my default response is, “Sure, let me walk with you there,” rather than providing directions. By leading the person directly to the destination, I demonstrate ownership and allow for an opportunity to develop a personal connection and a chance to build a relationship of trust and service despite perhaps a small inconvenience to my own schedule.
So how can we utilize this simple idea of taking good customer service further, and specifically within the lens of the central office of research administration? Excellence is cultivated well beyond the first interaction with an investigator. It is nurtured by education, empowerment, and awareness. By emphasizing excellent customer service, can we reduce an all-too-common situation of contention between investigators and an office of sponsored programs?

There are several opportunities to foster positive relationships between Research Administrators, Principal Investigators, and Departmental Staff. Following are a few suggestions:

- **Encourage a solution-based culture for research administrators by empowering staff to make their own decisions.** By nature, research administration careers exist to lessen the administrative burden of investigators, and to ensure compliance with federal, state, institution and sponsor policies and regulations. Having informed and educated staff with the autonomy to make decisions increases opportunities for efficiency, and great service also opens the door for staff to feel increased ownership and satisfaction (Krakovsky, 2019).

  One action we take at Montana State University is that, by choice, we do not require an institutional budget template for the OSP proposal approval. We offer budget templates and encourage their use; however, investigators are free to provide a budget in a format of their choosing. The decision is rooted in customer service as an effort to reduce administrative burden by avoiding a requirement that often leads to duplicate budget forms and entries. The expectation is for the fiscal manager to develop close relationships with the investigators and departmental staff and have the autonomy to navigate each proposal individually.

- **Provide proactive responses.** When responding to an inquiry, anticipate further needs and address common follow-up questions within your initial response to save everyone time. A response to a question for help on how to start a budget could also be an invitation to talk through the proposal or grant writing experience, in addition to addressing the budget. An email reply that points to a budget template website can be enhanced by providing a link to a website that contains your institution’s templates and providing the appropriate budget template that has been initiated with any particulars known from the original inquiry. Fewer emails are appreciated by professionals, and forming succinct, proactive replies with helpful and critical information creates better efficiency.

- **Targeted follow-up.** Focusing on the ascent from good to great, once a request is complete, consider if there are follow-up actions or communications you can initiate that could further foster your relationship with the investigator and further build trust. Examples may include scheduled follow-up communications, factsheets or checklists specific to the funding announcement or sponsor, progress reports on pending items, conveying action items to relevant staff, assistance with related proposal items, etc. These small actions relay a genuine interest in the investigator’s success and support the joint mission of the investigator and the sponsored programs office of attaining timely, accurate, and above-all successful proposal submissions.

- **Prevent issues from arising through ongoing training and communication.** Increased cross-training and knowledge sharing provide a win-win for all parties. Some institutions operate using lifecycle grant management while others do not. For the latter, training pre-award staff to recognize potential post-award issues and knowledge for how to resolve these issues during the proposal stage can prevent incorrect budgeting or other pitfalls that can wreak havoc on a project. We often see this in practice with proposal reviews to address subaward scope of work and indirect costs related to subawards. Likewise, cross-training from the central office out to departmental research administrators, such as institutional training on allowable and unallowable costs, and specifically common issues like participant support costs will help prevent difficult problems from occurring in the first place. New faculty or new researcher training can also be a mechanism for cross-training by communicating expectations and introducing grant-related policy. Communication across all aspects of the research life cycle is key to promoting efficiency and effectiveness.

Excellence is cultivated well beyond the first interaction with an investigator.

- **Retention.** Staff turnover is crippling in research administration, where the initial learning curve is steep, and policy and guidelines are a continually moving target. Everyone benefits from knowledge retention, long-term relationships between research administrators, department staff, and principal investigators strengthen trust and familiarity. Recognition helps employees feel valued and encourages a culture that appreciates, or even rewards, service excellence. A department or team cannot provide consistent excellent service with high turnover.

- **Celebrate success.** I absolutely love when I see an article about a student research project or an investigator I have supported receiving an award. I encourage you to reach out to these individuals to provide your congratulations. It shows you are paying attention to their work, their story, and most of all, that you care about their area of interest and their success.

- **Awareness.** Take a temperature check of your institutional procedures and current customer service climate. Are there opportunities for you to add efficiencies? Do investigators or departmental staff have actionable complaints? Do you perceive that there are areas of weakness in staffing? Do you provide mechanisms for feedback from the community you serve? Seek opportunities for feedback that may be utilized to assess your impact and improve your service.

By striving to foster relationships through excellence in customer service, we see prioritizing the mission of service has profound benefit. We increase efficiency, we build trust, we boost collaboration, and we increase the likelihood of experiencing excellent service more frequently. The concept is not new, but we can use a reminder from time to time. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “the difference between what we do, and what we are capable of doing, would solve most of the world’s problems.”

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**References**


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As research administrators, we approach every day, week, month, and year focused on proposals, agreements, IRB submissions, annual progress reports, biosketch formats, coverage analysis, financial balances, 2 CFR 200, and oh yes... compliance for almost everything, just to name a few. These components of the research administrator's life and profession should drive us towards a mission focusing on our customer. Is our customer the principal investigator? The government agency? The foundation or industry partner? Is it our home institution? How do we help power and drive the research mission towards excellence? In the sector of research administration that supports clinical and life sciences, we often become so focused on the National Institutes of Health (NIH), state departments of health, or “big pharma” that we could lose focus on the “ultimate mission,” the patient!

With patients in mind, respect for people is foundational. We empower our research administration teams with the expertise, flexibility, and creativity to respond quickly to the situational needs of faculty and study teams alike. Mission Focused! The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), part of the NIH, is dedicated to the concept of scientific translation. As depicted in Figure 1 (US DHHS, 2021), the patient is at the center of the translational science spectrum. Mission Focused! Whether you support basic or bench scientists, clinical trialists, or population health and community-based research, this all drives the concept of how we translate science to the benefit of our communities and ultimately the world, turning observations into interventions (Mehta, et al., 2021).

Patient Focused = Mission Focused!

A patient-centered approach begins with a commitment to collaboration between internal stakeholders to deliver advocacy, protection, privacy, and value to the patient. Mission Focused! Many elements that can sometimes drive us towards frustration, those pesky mission-critical research compliance committees (acronyms omitted to protect those that are just fulfilling their research administration roles) that we wish were not “in the way” assure that we are always an advocate for our patient. Mission Focused! Forms, applications, compliance, research ethics, scientific methods, data, biostatistics, deliverables and outcomes—can all be Mission Focused!

As shown in Figure 2, NCATS calls engaging stakeholders through a communication structure that enables and informs innovation for the benefit of patients across multiple modalities dissemination and implementation (Mehta, et al., 2021). The science of dissemination and implementation is informed by our understanding of the critical role people and systems play in adopting, disseminating, and maintaining these innovations in everyday, real-world settings.
For those of us committed to the research administration profession, not just in the clinical and life sciences sector, we urge you not to lose sight of the proverbial tree for the forest. Yes, we serve and support our faculty and principal investigators. Yes, we serve and support the success and safety of the research enterprise of our home institution. Yes, we serve and support the terms and conditions of our sponsors. Yes, we serve and support the compliance requirements of all those institutional committees. Ultimately though, it is all worth it. **Mission Focused!**

So here it is, all boiled down and condensed into a single sentence. Our job is to deliver administrative pathways that equip, enable, empower, and encourage the innovation and skills of our investigators to meet the diverse needs of our patients and communities impacted by clinically-focused academic research. **MISSION FOCUSED** on the ultimate customer: patients.

**Our Job is to Deliver Administrative Pathways that Equip, Enable, Empower, and Encourage the Innovation and Skills of Our Investigators.**

**References**


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**WORK SMART**

**Bringing Your Workflow Into 2022**

Recently, our health system’s research administration focused on workflow process improvement. To capitalize on investments the system had made, we utilized software that may be non-traditional in research administration.

First, we adopted Smartsheet, a web-based project management system that requires no coding experience, is user friendly to implement, and has great training videos available. We activated Smartsheet for automated no cost extension requests and IRB cede review requests. In operations, Smartsheet took our pilot-funding program’s selection process from hundreds of application emails, followed by scoring and evaluations in multiple spreadsheets, to a single source-of-truth database. Smartsheet allowed us to capture information and documents through forms and share among reviewers. It also allowed us to showcase key performance indicators through custom dashboards.

Second, we adopted Salesforce, a cloud-based customer relationship management (CRM) software with many possibilities for managing any institution’s operations. Originally developed for sales, Salesforce’s functionality was expanded to include a grant-management module. We utilize the basic version of Salesforce for research data requests and are building a workflow for clinical research start-up, from agreement execution to remote-monitor access requests. We have re-thought the use of a CRM to manage the investigator’s relationship with our institutional processes. We are supported by our in-house Salesforce developers.

Third, we expanded our use of Microsoft 365 beyond the core applications with which people are familiar (Excel, Word, and PowerPoint). The Enterprise solution has many additional applications for efficiency and collaboration. For example, since the onset of the pandemic many institutions are daily Teams users, but Microsoft 365 has Planner, which allows users to develop project plans from which tasks can be divvied up among teammates. Microsoft 365 has several applications that make work super-efficient; however, you may need to investigate the value of multiple options to make your selection.

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**Rebecca Atkinson, PhD,** serves as Strategic Research Project Director at Prisma Health. Rebecca’s role facilitates infrastructure projects to support health research start-up processes and expedite communications among the health system and its partners to create efficient operations. She can be reached at Rebecca.Atkinson@prismahealth.org.
What an amazing two-plus years this has been for us. We are witnesses to changes not only in how research and clinical trials are conducted, but also in how we work, and the tools we use daily. We are no longer “butts in seats” but are now a combination of remote/hybrid/in-person employees. One of the most significant outcomes is how we communicate and partner—in the department being that bridge between our faculty to our central offices and funders or if we are in a central office outward to our faculty and funders. While the modalities of how we work have changed, our partnerships and teams have not. We are the strategic partners. We are part of a relationship between many different teams. Collectively these partnerships are formalized by our mission statement and goals.

What does it mean to be a strategic partner working toward your organization’s mission? It means we are united in supporting that mission, completing the tasks needed regardless of obstacles. We are working toward a specified purpose that states both how and why the organization makes a positive impact in the world. At the University of Massachusetts Medical School where I am, the specified purpose is: “Our mission is to advance the health and wellness of our diverse communities throughout Massachusetts and across the world by leading and innovating in education, research, health care delivery, and public service.” I am sure your organization has a similar statement. Our role as a strategic partner working toward our mission statement is essential for the success of our faculty, departments, and campus.

The Harvard Business Review provides some suggestions on how we build our teams and network to ensure the success of our faculty and, in turn, our institutions (Harvard Business Review, 2021).

1. “Invest time in bonding over non-work topics”—take the time to get to know the faculty and their research, the people you need in your network to support them, and their sponsors. Get to know that person you are working with. The trick in any negotiation or partnership is to understand who that person is across the table from you or down the hall.

2. “Create a culture where expressing appreciation is the norm”—know how to sing someone’s praises. Say “please” and “thank you”—the most important phrases we learn very young but tend to forget. Recognize when there is an issue but work to resolve it. Own your mistakes. Give everyone a voice. If they don’t speak up, call on them or recognize them.

3. “Put a premium on authenticity”—embrace both positive and negative conversations. Give everyone the opportunity to talk but also know when to push pause and not create a toxic environment. Be yourself and remember a sense of humor is key. Our faculty are very creative and, at times, challenging people as they are constantly pushing the proverbial envelope.

4. Be strategic with your meeting—set an agenda; if a meeting starts going down a “rabbit hole,” recognize it and table that discussion for another time. Don’t have meetings just to say you had them. Be respectful of everyone’s time. Microsoft has everyone swipe in and out of a meeting and then they survey to see if the time was well spent.
They use this information to help inform whether or not to keep standing meetings and to enhance agendas for meetings and question the necessity of the meeting.

5. Pick up the phone or walk down the hall, and you will be amazed what you learn by going into someone’s space or your faculty’s lab. Use all these amazing tools we have gotten to know—Teams/Slack/Zoom/etc. to have conversations virtually when you are remote. Communication is key.

6. Step back and reassess. It is ok to expand or contract your team or adjust your partners as our organizations are fluid and the partners will change. It is also appropriate to change if goals are not being achieved or a discovery leads to a new pathway.

7. Publish all your mission statements (institutional, departmental, and your team’s), so you see them regularly. Talk about them and embrace them.

Just as our faculty are creative, so too must we be creative, sometimes at lightning speed. Embrace this dynamic atmosphere, as it is said, Carpe diem—seize the day, moment, or opportunity. Be present to your respective faculty and on it for your respective institution. Stay nimble and provide strategic partnership. Build your networks, challenge, be inclusive, train, listen, and communicate. There must be a willingness to come together, be transparent, have the tough conversations—respectfully, and a desire to be that strategic partner who is cognizant of the institute’s mission, the players, and how to move to an even stronger level of service.

As strategic partners, we must cultivate all relationships—internal and external. We must unify to ensure mutual success and that we achieve the objectives of our mission statement. We must be willing to take a back seat. We will never win a Nobel Prize, at least I won’t, but I have had faculty who have achieved that recognition, and I was gratified to be a part of that journey. As President Kennedy said, “Partnership is not a posture but a process—a continuous process that grows stronger each year as we devote ourselves to common tasks.”

Know your organization’s mission statement, your department’s mission, build your networks, mentor your teams, stay current, and, above, all be open. As they say, learn one new thing a day or do one thing a day that challenges you. Our positions provide us a unique opportunity to be partners in an amazing journey every day. Embrace it, embrace your faculty, embrace your institution. Make it more than a job; make it a mission.

Reference

Randi Wasik has extensive leadership experience at four universities and two teaching hospitals—managing both basic science research as well as clinical operations at both the departmental and central level. She is well-versed in pre-award and post-award operations, IRB, IACUC, training mentoring, and higher education administration. Randi can be reached at Randi.Wasik@umassmed.edu.
Budgeting and Accounting for Graduate Research Assistant Tuition

By Shannon Irey

For institutions that routinely charge Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) tuition to sponsored projects, it is important to make sure that the amount budgeted is accurate for your unit and any other collaborating unit can help alleviate unexpected post-award accounting issues.

Budgeting for Tuition

Tuition is the per credit cost that graduate students are charged for taking classes. Tuition rates are typically established each academic year by the institution.

When budgeting, tuition should follow effort as it is written in the scope of work or project narrative. If a budget includes GRA salary for a full academic year, you will want to include two semesters (or 4 quarters) of tuition; if it includes the salary for only part of the year, you may only need to include tuition for one term. Unlike undergraduate tuition, graduate tuition may only be charged in the Fall and Spring terms. Also, check your institutional guidance regarding resident vs. non-resident tuition.

You will also want to look at the proposed start dates for the project to see if you will include currently approved rates or if you should include the currently approved rate plus an inflation factor per your institutional guidance and sponsor allowance. Keep in mind some sponsors only allow currently approved rates at the proposal stage.

Tuition will likely be exempt from the indirect calculation if your institution and sponsor utilize a Modified Total Direct Cost base for applying Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs. Consult your institution’s Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement (NICRA).

Post-Award: Accounting for GRA Tuition

Remitted tuition, like all costs in a budget, must be reasonable, allocable, consistently applied, and allowed on the award. Tuition should follow the effort of the GRA student paid on that project. If a GRA works on more than one project (sponsored or other), the tuition should be allocated between the projects in the same proportion as their effort. If salary needs to be reallocated, tuition should also be reallocated. General fees such as technology charges, transportation fees, and special course fees are generally not provided to graduate assistants and should not be budgeted on or charged to a sponsored project. As always, defer to your institution’s practices.
"§ 200.466 Scholarships and student aid costs."

(a) Costs of scholarships, fellowships, and other programs of student aid at IHEs are allowable only when the purpose of the Federal award is to provide training to selected participants and the charge is approved by the Federal awarding agency. However, tuition remission and other forms of compensation paid as, or in lieu of, wages to students performing necessary work are allowable provided that: (1) The individual is conducting activities necessary to the Federal award; (2) Tuition remission and other support are provided in accordance with established policy of the IHE and consistently provided in a like manner to students in return for similar activities conducted under Federal awards as well as other activities; and (3) During the academic period, the student is enrolled in an advanced degree program at a non-Federal entity or affiliated institution and the activities of the student in relation to the Federal award are related to the degree program; (4) The tuition or other payments are reasonable compensation for the work performed and are conditioned explicitly upon the performance of necessary work; and (5) It is the IHE’s practice to similarly compensate students under Federal awards as well as other activities.

§ 200.1 Definitions.

Modified total direct costs (MTDC), consisting of all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). Modified total direct costs shall exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

For most institutions, tuition paid for by a sponsor on behalf of a student is considered compensation and will be reported to the student via 1098-T each tax year. Payment methods for tuition may also vary from institution to institution. For example, tuition may be set up each semester for payment on the student’s behalf using an institutional billing system that allows tuition to be set up on the appropriate account, requiring review by the appropriate fiscal officer before it is expensed to the project.

**Conclusion**

Tuition remission payments charged to sponsored awards should comply with federal and institutional requirements. Consult sponsor and institutional guidance prior to budgeting and charging tuition remission on sponsored projects.

**Reference**


**Shannon Irey** is a Training & Information Coordinator in the Office of Sponsored Programs at Colorado State University. Shannon is a Certified Research Administrator. She has been an NCURA member since 2017. In her current role, Shannon provides training in pre and post award administration to research administrators at CSU. She can be reached at shannon.irey@colostate.edu.

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Board Update

The NCURA Board of Directors had its first meeting of 2022 in San Diego, California. The meeting was held February 5-6. The Board continues its efforts with high engagement and excitement. Highlights of the meeting include:

- President Ara Tahmassian provided a warm welcome to the Board members (in person and virtually) and proceeded with a reminder of NCURA’s Code of Conduct, conflict of interest and confidentiality policies.
- On request of the Board of Directors during their November 2021 meeting, the membership was surveyed for feedback on the question of regional affiliation when a member is working remotely from another region than where the institution is geographically located. For example: if a member lived in New York City (Region 2) and worked for a west coast university (Region 6).
  - After thorough discussion and based on the results of the survey, it was moved and seconded to update the following NCURA administrative policy, which currently states the following:
    III REGIONS
    A. The Council shall be comprised of Regions, each of which may operate in a manner consistent with the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Council. All members of the Council shall be assigned to a region based on their geographical location.
    
    A motion was passed unanimously by the Board to change the administrative policies III. Regions, Item A. to incorporate the following:
    Geographical location is defined as the NCURA members’ primary institutional location.
    b) Current Regional Officers
    Recognizing that there may be members whose employment, or residence, location may have changed while they were elected members of Regional Leadership, the Board voted to defer these specific cases to the Regional Leadership to determine best course of action for elected officers affected by this decision.
- Rosie Madnick, Immediate Past President, gave an overview of the latest Remote Work Survey sent to the membership in January 2022. Over 1700 members responded and 75% of respondents were currently working in a flexible/hybrid/remote capacity. The committee members will be meeting in the next several weeks to do a deep dive into the data.
- Jill Tincher, Chair, Select Committee on Peer Programs (SCPP) and Jennifer Ponting, Chair, Select Committee on Global Affairs (SCGA) were Board guests.
  - Ms. Tincher gave an overview of the Peer Programs including Peer Review. In 2022 to date, SCPP is contracted to perform 10 engagements (6 Reviews and 4 Advisories).
  - SCPP is currently working on two initiatives:
    - A master calendar to guide SCPP members year-over-year on standard and non-standard activities which must be performed consistently across the years.
      - Standard activities include board reports, notable practice articles, etc.
      - Non-Standard activities include call for reviewers, review/update of standards, etc.
    - Updating a reviewer guidance document which identifies the estimated time commitments for peer reviewers including reviewing the briefing book, preparing questions for on-site visit, performing the on-site portion, writing, editing and finalizing the report. With a heightened awareness of these time commitments, reviewers can plan their professional, NCURA and personal commitments to ensure the success of their experience and the report.
  - Ms. Ponting shared SCGA is a working group and ambassadors for the global portion of our membership. SCGA is also responsible for the Global Fellowship program. Due to Covid all the 2020 fellows, except for one, still need to complete their fellowships. As result, SCGA deferred making any new calls for fellowship applications and are planning for the next call to occur in 2023. They’ve started working on a virtual fellowship program and will pilot it to see if a virtual fellowship could work effectively.
  - SCGA is working on a country profile guidebook and will solicit members from Region VIII to help with the information.
  - SCGA is working on offering a few global workshops in Prague, Czech Republic this fall.
  - Lastly, SCGA is working on the Afghan refugee program trying to provide options of research administration jobs available to them in the U.S.
- President Tahmassian, shared with the Board he wanted to look for potential global initiatives primarily around emerging institutions. The Board brainstormed on potential initiatives. The second part was a shift to looking at domestic initiatives and the Board did additional brainstorming. He will review the brainstorming efforts and will narrow down items for presidential charges.
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Bulk Discounts!
The week of January 15–22, 2022 marked “Global Goals Week” at Expo 2020 Dubai. It was the first time that occasion was held outside the UN headquarters. The opportunity to witness this unique event—aimed to create awareness around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), celebrate progress made so far, and highlight the role of individuals and communities in further advancing these goals—made me think. What role do researchers and the research administration community play in the progress towards achieving SDGs?

The major social, environmental, and economic challenges that the SDGs aim to address call for targeted research and innovation initiatives that cut across multiple actors, sectors, and disciplines. For example, poverty cannot be solved without attention to the interconnections between nutrition, health, infrastructure, and education, as well as redistributive tax policy (Mazzucato, 2018). Taking a “mission-oriented” approach to research funding is increasingly seen as an efficient way to leverage research and innovation in order to meet global challenges. The emphasis is placed on creating a measurable impact on societal challenges by harnessing the power of collaboration between the different actors to address grand challenges and achieve evidence-based outcomes (Global Research Council, 2020).

In this article, I explore mission-oriented research and how such research can contribute to the realization of the SDGs. I focus on the role of research administrators and how their contribution is critical to the realization of mission-oriented research.

What Are SDGs?
The SDGs, initially launched in 2015, underpin the UN’s broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 17 initiatives, shown in the figure below, cover a wide range of interrelated goals, including poverty eradication, economic growth, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and peace for all people by 2030.

The importance of research and innovation for the realization of the SDGs was emphasized during the United Nations first Sustainable Development Goal Summit held in September 2019. As part of the decade of action and delivery, the declaration committed to solving challenges through international cooperation and global partnerships: “We will promote research, capacity-building initiatives, innovation and technologies towards advancing the SDGs and promote the use of scientific evidence from all fields to enable the transformation to sustainable development” (Independent Group of Scientists, 2019).

“IT IS UP TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, TO TURN THIS ENGAGEMENT INTO PARTNERSHIPS AND INVESTMENTS THAT TANGIBLY IMPROVE PEOPLE’S LIVES EVERYWHERE”

—Amina J Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Universities and researchers are well placed to play a leading role in the cross-sectoral effort needed to address these grand challenges. They provide valuable expertise and are considered neutral, trusted, and influential players by stakeholders and the public at large (Global Research Council, 2020).

Mission-Oriented Research
In simple terms, mission-oriented research provides a purpose for research activities, a guide to ensure that research achieves its intended goal and has societal impact. Mission-oriented research seeks to provide a systemic approach, one that is solution-based and outcome-oriented (Mazzucato, 2018). The concept originated with Weinberg (1967), who introduced the idea of “big science deployed to meet big problems.”

A mission-oriented approach uses specific challenges to stimulate innovation across sectors. Well-defined missions focus on solving...
important societal challenges related to climate change and environmental quality, demographic changes, health and well-being, mobility issues, etc. As depicted in the following figure, Mazzucato’s vision of these SDGs is that they will form grand challenges that can be broken down into various missions and then further broken down into particular “projects” (“Missions” aim, 2020).

Mazzucato (2018) argues that “missions should be broad enough to engage the public and attract cross-sectoral investment and remain focused enough to involve industry and achieve measurable success. By setting the direction for a solution, missions do not specify how to achieve success. Rather, they stimulate the development of a range of different solutions to achieve the objective.”

The goal of a mission is to be ambitious, aim high, be innovative, and move fast. It’s a shift from unstructured, bottom-up processes for organizing research projects to something that seeks to apply a logic to the way research is carried out. But success will not just be about the research and innovation; it will be much broader in terms of the collaborations created and the impact achieved.

Such success is also dependent on a multitude of actors, including governments, policy makers, funding agencies, universities, industries, and the public at large. Research administrators play a very important role in ensuring the success of mission-oriented research. I will now explore the crucial role they play in enabling collaboration, promoting interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research, and developing agile policies.

**Enablers for Collaboration**

As we saw earlier, the challenges that these SDGs call us to address, and the very nature of mission-oriented research, are intrinsically global in nature; these challenges call for global responses that can only be achieved by forming collaborations between the various actors involved. Achieving these grand missions means adopting a more global take on research collaboration, one that transcends traditional bilateral agreements to multi-national and even supra-national agreements that involve multiple actors. Examples include collaborations across different industries, and new forms of partnerships between the public sector, the private sector, and civil society organizations.

Research administrators and research development teams play a key role in enabling research collaboration. By identifying opportunities for research collaboration and designing long-term strategic partnerships that go beyond collaboration on specific projects to institutional and cross-institutional collaboration, they facilitate faculty and researchers’ access to a wide network of potential partners and enable the larger group to forge the collaborations and agreements needed to address global challenges.

**Promoting Interdisciplinary and Cross-Disciplinary Research**

SDGs are multidisciplinary in nature. For example, SDG 14, “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development,” could be broken down into many missions; for example, “a plastic-free ocean.” This focus could stimulate research and innovation to clear plastic waste from oceans; reduce the use of plastics; develop new materials; innovate recycling; research the health impacts from micro-plastics, behavior, and economics; or drive public engagement to clean up beaches. The objective should be addressed by multiple actors, stimulating cross-discipline academic work, and support a strong focus
on the intersection between the natural sciences, formal sciences, social sciences, and humanities (Mazzucato, 2018).

Research proposals that are multidisciplinary or cross-disciplinary are complex in nature. They require a lot of coordination and orchestrated efforts to bring together research teams from different disciplines. They also require imagining different incentives and funding structures and new ways of measuring success and impact that go beyond conventional research success indicators such as publications and citations. Research administrators are key players in promoting interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research; they bring the much needed flexibility and adaptability in research administration practices to ensure the success of those research projects.

**Developing Agile Policies**

Research administrators are tasked with the need to create policies and systems that facilitate and enable research and innovation and balance the need for sound governance, flexibility, and transparency. With the SDGs and mission-oriented research in mind, the need to develop systematic mission-oriented policies becomes crucial (Mazzucato, 2018). Those policies should not only focus on the identification of missing links, failures, inefficiencies, and bottlenecks, but also provide foresight to scrutinize future opportunities and identify how strengths may be used to overcome weaknesses. Developing such enabling policies requires taking a hard look at existing policies and practices and putting on an “innovation hat” to imagine new policies and ensure that all stakeholders, including faculty and researchers, are involved in the design and implementation of new solutions and change management.

Working towards the 2030 SDGs to create a better, more prosperous, and peaceful world for all requires effort from every one of us.

**References**


NCURA RESEARCH PROGRAM

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The purpose of the Program is to create opportunities for NCURA members, faculty, and staff to innovate and pursue excellence in developing and sustaining critical partnerships and include but are not limited to:

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Collaboration is as important as knowledge or experience. The NCURA network of research administrators allows us to have colleagues nationally and globally who are readily available to help solve complex regulatory questions or issues in our field. This is the inaugural NCURA Magazine article focused on collaborations of any type: internally within institutions, across the U.S. and globally, with federal agency partners, and with other non-profit organizations.

The National Institutes of Health created the ambitious All of Us Research Program (https://allofus.nih.gov) in 2016 with the goal of involving one million people across the U.S. to help build one of the most diverse health databases in history, welcoming participants from all backgrounds. Researchers will learn how biology, lifestyle, and environment affect health in order to find ways to treat and prevent disease.

To achieve this goal, NIH has engaged partner organizations in all aspects of the program: community engagement, recruitment and enrollment, data resources, supporting participant systems, and managing biospecimens to name a few. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has partnered with NIH to ensure Veterans are represented in this critical national research effort. Using a more flexible approach to implementing the program across the nation, the VA tasked the Nonprofit Research and Education Corporation (NPC) affiliates that support VA extramural research and education activities with the administration of the program (www.navref.org/directory).

At the inception of the VA All of Us program, two NPCs associated with the Program Principal Investigators were funded. These NPCs were tasked with building a central Coordinating Team and funding VA recruitment and enrollment sites to meet program needs. Key to the program’s success, the Coordinating Team was created as a hub at the center of all VA program operations and serves as the point of connection to the program partners and NIH. Importantly, the culture of the hub group is: 1) mission forward, 2) relationship and people based, 3) focused on empowerment of staff at all levels, and 4) valuing a nimble mindset. Together, guided by these principles, the small team oversees program administration and operations for nearly 20 recruitment and enrollment sites across the country who have recruited over 10,000 Veteran participants to date to sign up via the program’s digital portal.

Collaboration is key to success in a large, distributed, and fast-paced program like All of Us. Facilitated by strong relationships and bolstered by frequent communication, subject matter experts contribute to a vast array of daily operations, spanning from Veteran engagement and outreach to development and management of data systems. Programmatic tasks undertaken by the Coordinating Team routinely involve hundreds of colleagues, with only about one quarter within the umbrella of the VA, with the remaining three quarters coming from a broad array of program partners and program operations organizations. Shared mission, intellectually rewarding idea sharing, and a sense of comradery and fun have surfaced as essential to creating a cohesive output and ensuring urgent needs are prioritized.

Ultimately, to achieve successful collaboration, team members must want to collaborate. Clinical research, especially in the public sector, is typically demanding and stressful, even more so when medical centers are under extraordinary strain to provide care for patients in a pandemic. Establishing time at work for open conversation, personal connections within the team, and humor makes collaboration an enjoyable experience and ultimately increases team satisfaction and reduces burnout. Team members have a voice in the recruitment and hiring of new team members with a focus on finding new staff who bring diversity of thought, new expertise and experience, work ethic, a desire to learn, flexibility, and a strong sense of humor. The result of this approach is a cohesive team of strong individuals who are most successful when working together. As the VA All of Us program grows larger and the workplace continues to rely heavily on remote work, maintaining the team culture and cohesiveness will be imperative to future success.

Whether you are a funded institution or not, all NCURA members who are 18 years of age or over and reside in the U.S. can participate in All of Us by visiting JoinAllofUs.org. U.S. Veterans can learn more or enroll at our Veteran-dedicated webpage: Veterans.joinallofus.org.

Sherry Sawyer, PhD, is the Director and one of three Co-Principal Investigators of the Department of Veteran’s Affairs All of Us Research Program, Stationed at VA Boston Healthcare System, Sherry directs national cohort operations and strategy for VA All of Us. Prior to joining VA, she gained more than a decade of experience building large research enterprises at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and directing cohort operations and research strategy in the academic medical setting. She can be reached at Sherilyn.Sawyer@va.gov.

Denise Moody is the Director of Research Administration at the Boston VA Research Institute. She serves as a Magazine contributing editor and member of the Region I advisory committee. Denise has served in numerous roles with NCURA as the National Secretary, Nominating & Leadership Development Committee Chair, SPA II traveling workshop faculty, Board member, peer reviewer, and program committees and can be reached at denise.moody@bvari.org.
Happy 2022! Are you still teaching virtually? Have you gone into the classroom yet? Will you be stepping onto a big stage with a podium and a microphone soon?

For some of us, it has been almost 2 years since we presented anything in front of a real live audience. We have grown accustomed to our cozy virtual learning environments, where we can sit comfortably with our shoes off, in front of multiple screens with notes in hand. We have learned to love and rely on the perks of virtual platforms; being able to quickly share documents, easily launching learning videos, utilizing polls, whiteboards, and so much more.

As we eventually enter the training room to offer in-person learning opportunities again, expect to get nervous standing up in front of a room of colleagues and peers. It is only normal that there will be an adjustment phase that comes with relearning how to present in person again. Add to that, some of us may be navigating new, blended, hybrid training environments.

At times, when nerves and stakes are high, all public speakers can get overly focused on their own performance. This intense focus inward only increases our stress and anxiety in the moment. These feelings often linger even after the moment has passed. Do any of these ruminating thoughts sound familiar? I should have said it this way instead. I forgot to include my funny story. I was talking too slow. Did I forget to include the folks on Zoom? Why was I pacing? Um, I can’t stop saying um!

Of course, our presentation styles and delivery are important in creating a comfortable environment for people to learn. We want to use our best public speaking skills to draw in our audience, encourage interest in the content and include them in the learning experience. However, let’s not lose sight of our true mission as trainers—which is to give learners what they need to be successful. Instead of focusing inward, on ourselves, let’s follow these tips to keep the focus outward, on our learners:

1. Deliver your material in alignment with the marketed learning objectives and session description. Writing sound learning objectives is key to designing a learning experience that addresses learner needs. Your learning objectives will serve as the road map for designing training that meets a need or fills a knowledge or skill gap. Revisit the session description and objectives as you develop content to ensure that the information and activities are designed to meet the learning objectives. During content delivery, pause and reflect on your learning objectives to ensure you are hitting each of them as promised.

2. Give learners what they need to be successful by considering what they need to know (Knowledge), what they need to be able to do (Skills), and how to feel about it (Attitudes). ASK what you hope learners will do differently when they return to work. What Attitudes do you want learners to have when they return to their desks, in addition to what new Skills and Knowledge? Craft learning objectives based on these domains using measurable action verbs:

   **ATTITUDES:** Agree, Analyze, Assess, Believe, Collaborate, Comply, Convince, Defend, Endorse, Evaluate, Recommend, Select, Support

   **SKILLS:** Administer, Alter, Apply, Assemble, Build, Change, Demonstrate, Design, Develop, Draft, Execute, Measure, Perform, Prepare, Repair

   **KNOWLEDGE:** Compare, Contrast, Define, Describe, Distinguish, Explain, Identify, Itemize, Label, List, Name, Recite, Recognize, Recount, Relate, State

3. Identify the needs of your specific learner group and focus your content on what they need. Are you speaking to PIs or Research Administrators? Often the needs of each group are different. Also, is the topic or skill new to your learners or will you have a mix of novice and experienced attendees? Adjust your content specifically to meet the unique needs of each of your audience groups as necessary. Understanding your audience makeup is key for content development and activity design.

4. Provide time for questions and ask for feedback. Allowing time for questions invites participation into the training process and allows learners to clarify and assess their learning. Asking or feedback helps you as a trainer determine how the training is received and what improvements might be made for future iterations.

If we confidently check all the boxes above, we can rest our heads knowing that we were successful in our role as a trainer. We can calm those nerves and ruminating thoughts knowing that our job was well done. Let us all focus on the mission and remember: It’s All About the Learners.

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By Melanie Hebl and Tricia Callahan
STAY OUT OF THE NEWS!

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In the last two years research security has emerged as a key science and technology (S&T) priority in the United States (US) and the European Union (EU). In the U.S., this policy was formulated through the National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM)-33, an executive initiative released at the end of the Trump Administration on January 14th 2021. Its goal is to “strengthen protections of United States Government-supported R&D against foreign government interference and exploitation” while “maintaining an open environment to foster research discoveries and innovation that benefit our nation and the world.” (White House, 2021)

It is not only the United States who have identified research security to be a policy priority. On 18th of January 2022 the European Commission (EC) released a working paper on Tackling Research & Innovation Foreign Interference. While the commission does not clearly identify countries as sources of a threat to research, it identifies particular known hacking groups and other actors. As a working paper, this document is not binding guidance. Nevertheless it is possible that the research security discussion will reach the EU legislative with the release of this working paper.

The U.S. government has indicted both U.S. and foreign-born scientists. The former is represented by U.S. born Harvard researcher Charles Lieber, who was convicted in December 2021 by a federal jury on counts of making false statements to federal authorities and tax fraud. His conviction was due to his failure to disclose his foreign ties to the National Institutes of Health and Department of Defense, both of which required such disclosures at the time (Silver, 2021). In the case of the latter, it included MIT scientist Gang Chen, initially arrested for ties to Chinese organizations (Korn & Viswanatha, 2021), and Temple University professor Xiaoxing Xi accused of handing over technical documents to the Chinese government (Devlin & Emshwiller, 2015). Both cases were dropped. In Dr. Xi’s case the U.S. government simply had misunderstood the significance of the research, while in Dr. Chen’s case the disclosure policy was not clear. NSPM-33 aims to clarify such federal disclosure requirements which is a key component of the newly released implementation guidance for the memorandum.

The directive clearly identifies threats to the security of U.S. federally-funded research from some foreign countries. This executive memorandum will have wide ranging implications on Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and Research Performing Organization (RPOs) and the role and responsibilities of their research administrators. The National Science and Technology Council and the White House Office for Science and Technology Policy have recently released an implementation guidance identifying concrete measures to be taken.

This implementation guidance will have an impact for research administrators at U.S. universities and their international collaborators. There will be requirements for new measures and steps for disclosure and research management once the finalized implementation guide is released in the United States, which it is expected to by mid-2022 and will be accompanied by an implementation grace period of one year. It is also possible that the EC working paper creates a discussion on the topic of research security in EU legislative bodies.

“The implementation guidance will have an impact for research administrators at U.S. universities and their international collaborators.”

The NSPM-33 implementation guidance consists of five key areas:

- The federal government will institute disclosure requirements for a majority of researchers and standardize these requirements. Expect to disclose nearly all ties to foreign research organizations and any program sponsored by a foreign organization or government. It will also fall on the IHE/RPO to instruct individuals on how to disclose this information.
- The federal government will use Digital Persistent Identifiers (DPIs) to ease the administrative burden on RPOs and IHEs. Expect setting up or using a DPI service for researchers which will be accessible and used across all government agencies and include all the necessary disclosure information.
- The consequences for violation of disclosure requirements can range from administrative and civil to criminal consequences depending
on the severity of the violation. Administrative actions may include rejection of an award application, preservation of award but exclusion of certain individuals, suspension/termination of federal employment or an R&D award or Title IV funds by the Department of Education.

- Government agencies will be engaged in information sharing using platforms such as SAM.gov and the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about disclosure violations but will seek to publicly share information about results and risk analyses.
- Research institutions receiving more than $50 million per year for the last two fiscal years in Federal science and technology support will be required to operate a Research Security Program which includes cybersecurity and foreign travel security considerations, as well as providing research security and export control training to relevant staff.

“‘This coordinated policy-making effort shows a transatlantic commitment to jointly reinforce a common agenda by safeguarding mutual research interests.’”

The EC working paper on Tackling R&I foreign interference on the other hand currently just formulates recommendation and guidelines. The EU defines foreign interference activities as those “which are coercive, covert, deceptive, or corrupting and are contrary to the sovereignty, values, and interests of the EU” (European Commission, 2022). The working paper makes recommendations to IHEs and RPOs across four categories: values, governance, partnerships, and cybersecurity.

- In the first category the EU recommends a value-based assessment of countries and partner institutions to identify potential foreign interference concerns. The Academic Freedom Index (AFI) is considered a robust indicator of academic freedom world-wide and a first step for a risk assessment. This should be followed by a detailed assessment of the research environment in the country of interest, analyzing motives for undermining academic freedom and conducting institution-specific vulnerability assessments.
- Secondly, IHEs and RPOs are encouraged to publish a code of conduct for foreign interference (FI). This code should include protections for academic freedom, data and intellectual property security, and define ethics rules. It should also establish procedures for identification of foreign interference (including data breaches and ethically unsound research), whistleblower protections and identification of internal conflicts of interest. As a second measure, a foreign interference committee should be instituted to oversee such activities.
- The third pillar of the recommendation addresses risk management in IHE and RPO partnerships. The foreign interference committee should ensure that knowledge security and academic integrity is protected in all partnerships by reviewing procedures, expanding and strengthening them where needed. This includes the development of a risk management strategy, establishing minimum standards of FI due diligence for partnerships as well as raising awareness for export control and foreign direct investment concerns. Procedures should be established to apply FI assessments to partner agreements, using a positive approach to identify safe and low risk partnerships.
- Lastly, the working paper makes recommendations regarding cybersecurity as a key component of FI. It focuses on cyber behavior and technology with cybersecurity awareness as a cornerstone. Institutions should develop trainings and seminars on data protection technology, digital hygiene and confidential computing. Further, technology investments should be made to provide access control and secure hardware. Organizations should also institute a centralized management approach for operating systems and installed applications and disable and remove local administration rights (LAR).

It is clear that research security has become a key S&T priority for the United States and the European Union, with the U.S. taking the lead in mandating administrative measurements to safeguard research security. This coordinated policy-making effort shows a transatlantic commitment to jointly reinforce a common agenda by safeguarding mutual research interests. This new mandate introduces extra layers of complex administrative burdens to the U.S. research ecosystem. Research administrators are required to stay informed regarding new policy requirements and developments, to balance safeguarding their institution’s integrity while still fostering an unbiased space for international collaboration, especially with China. Research administrators once again, are “caught in the middle” between the research scientists and research organization, and are at risk to be seen as “an unnecessary interference with research” by researchers (Kaplan, 1959). The extent to which these new mandates affect existing and future international research collaborations is becoming broader in the case of the United States and Europe, and such policies inhibiting or compartmentalizing research collaboration can be expected to continue in a new global realignment. ■

References
Devlin, B. & Emshwiller, J. R. (2015, Sep 11). U.S. drops charges that temple university professor sought to give tech secrets to china; lawyer for xiaoxing xj says FBI misunderstood science; dropped charges mark setback for U.S. efforts to get tough on economic espionage. Wall Street Journal (Online)

Jan Brüegmann is currently the Program Associate for NCURA Global Initiatives. He also serves as the Scientific Assistant at the German Aerospace Center (DLR), in Washington, DC. Prior, he has worked at the European Space Agency. Jan has a masters degree in International Affairs from Penn State University. He can be reached at bruegmann@ncura.edu
Education Scholarship Fund Select Committee Update:

The Education Scholarship Fund has opened the Spring 2022 call for applications! If you are currently enrolled in a master’s degree program in research administration and have been an NCURA member for at least one year we invite you to apply for the NCURA Education Scholarship Fund $2,500 scholarship. Applications are being accepted until April 4, 2022. Information on requirements, how to apply, the review process, FAQs, and the link to submit your application can be found at www.ncura.edu/esfapply.

The Education Scholarship Fund awarded $2,500 scholarships to two of the Fall 2021 applicants. We are happy to announce that Kristi Dorsey of the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and Melissa Freudenberger of Clemson University are our two latest scholarship awardees.

When asked about her involvement in NCURA since she joined in late 2019, Kristi stated, “Since joining [NCURA], I have benefited from the many training opportunities and large network of other research administration professionals who truly stand by the motto of “supporting research… together.” It has been an absolute pleasure to be a part of this organization and I look forward to continuing to learn and grow with NCURA.” Kristi decided to pursue a degree in research administration, “to enhance my ability to support the research endeavors of our stellar and dedicated faculty, staff, and students.” Kristi additionally shared, “My passion for Research Administration has only strengthened since enrolling in Johns Hopkins University’s Master of Science in Research Administration degree program.”

Melissa joined NCURA in June 2020 and “quickly found the NCURA Region III Research Administration Mentoring Program (R3RAMP) and joined as a mentee in the course.” Since then, she has also served as a board member of the Philanthropy Committee and now serves as the Philanthropy Committee Coordinator. It was through the R3RAMP Program that she was introduced to mentors who had completed graduate research administration programs and they “found it beneficial for career advancement and to help them better understand the field.” Melissa’s exposure to mentors and experienced research administrators inspired her to pursue a master’s degree in research administration.

Congratulations, Kristi and Melissa. Your NCURA colleagues are rooting for your success!

Thank you to all the members who have donated over the years to the Education Scholarship Fund. We couldn’t do what we do as a select committee without all your generous support. We hope you are able to appreciate that your donation has indeed made a positive impact to the lives of your fellow Research Administrators.

2022 Education Scholarship Fund Select Committee Members

Chair
Olive Giovannetti, University of California-San Francisco

Vice Chair
Nicole Nichols, Washington University in St. Louis

Adam Carter, Marine Biological Laboratory
Georgetta Dennis, The University of Chicago
Lizette Gonzales, Texas A & M University - Kingsville
Jennifer Harman, University of Rochester Medical Center
Alexa Van Dalsem, University of Colorado Boulder

For more information about the Education Scholarship Fund, please visit us at: www.ncura.edu/esf
Research.gov, the modernization of the soon-to-retire FastLane System, is providing the next generation of grant proposal capabilities for the research community and the National Science Foundation.

Proposal Submission Then and Now

Before the internet, a grant proposal traveled by plane, train, or automobile to ensure the 30 neatly stapled paper copies were hand delivered to a federal agency by 5 o’clock on the deadline day. In the mid 90’s, the National Science Foundation (NSF) revolutionized the financial assistance process with the FastLane electronic proposal submission and grants management system.

Launched in 1994, FastLane was cutting-edge technology. Now, after more than a quarter century, new advances in technology and an ongoing focus on an improved user experience have enabled NSF to introduce modernized architecture to meet current and future requirements in tandem with a plan to decommission FastLane’s technology, which has become inflexible and expensive to maintain. Research.gov is being developed incrementally, and features have expanded to support the transition of all proposal preparation and submission functionality from FastLane to Research.gov by a target date of December 31, 2022. A target date to fully transition all remaining FastLane functions to Research.gov has not yet been determined.

Today, working closely with the research community, NSF continues to innovate and bring current technology to grant proposal submission and award management. The Research.gov Proposal Submission System includes automated compliance checking and the structure needed to enable text and data mining. These and other advances support the Foundation’s goals of improving the focus of funding opportunities, the quality of reviews, and the time from proposal submission to decision.

Modern, Agile and Tailored

Fast, accurate and secure business systems foster efficiency and reduce administrative burden for both the research community and NSF. NSF Director Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan explained in Important Notice No. 147 (National Science Foundation, 2020), that NSF “has led the way with modern, agile systems tailored to meet the needs of the research community” in fulfilling its mission to promote the progress of science—systems that also include the Award Cash Management Service (ACMS), Project Reporting, and Notifications & Requests. As mentioned in the Notice, FastLane is targeted to be removed as a submission option from all funding opportunities by December 31, 2022.

The Transition to Research.gov

The first iteration of the Research.gov Proposal Submission System was deployed in 2018 and only supported one submission type and one proposal type. Now, the Research.gov Proposal Submission System supports all submission types and 90% of the proposal types. A campaign is currently underway to migrate all NSF funding opportunities to Research.gov. As the final proposal types are developed and released, the solicitations related to them will also migrate.

Available Now in the Research.gov Proposal Submission System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal Types</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal, including Separately Submitted Collaborative Proposals from Multiple Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Infrastructure Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideas Lab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rapid Response Research (RAPID)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EARly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Advanced by Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering (RAISE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Opportunities for Academic Liaison with Industry (GOALI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Submission Types

- Letter of Intent
- Preliminary Proposal
- Full Proposal related to a Preliminary Proposal
- Renewal and Accomplishment-Based Renewal

In FastLane, Coming Soon to the Research.gov Proposal Submission System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal Types</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship Proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBIR and STTR Phases I/II Proposals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NSF strongly encourages research administrators, faculty, and researchers to prepare themselves and their organizations for the transition by exploring the Research.gov Proposal Preparation Demo Site, Research.gov About Proposal Preparation and Submission page, and Electronic Research Administration (ERA) Forum website.

**Alternative Routes to Grant Proposal Submission**
Grants.gov, operated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a centralized location for grant seekers to apply for federal funding opportunities. Grants.gov will remain a proposal submission option for most NSF funding opportunities after FastLane proposal submission is retired. As part of the transition, the Research.gov Proposal Submission System will take over Grants.gov application processing from FastLane. Similarly, system-to-system submissions will also transition to Research.gov. Post-submission updates to proposal documents or budgets will be done using Research.gov.

**Proposal Innovations**
The Research.gov Proposal Submission System embodies a new generation of grant proposal capabilities. A set-up wizard tailors a proposal with the required sections. An expanded number of advanced compliance checks means potential issues and errors are identified for resolution in real time. The system gives immediate notice of success, actionable warnings or errors when the Cover Sheet is saved, a document is uploaded, or a budget is edited. A side-by-side comparison exemplifies the magnitude of the innovations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FastLane Proposal Submission</th>
<th>Research.gov Proposal Submission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55 compliance checks</td>
<td>100+ compliance checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance checks run at submission</td>
<td>Compliance checks run as documents are uploaded or form data is saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error messages are less specific</td>
<td>Error messages are more specific and actionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uploaded PDF files are redistilled with lower image resolution</td>
<td>Uploaded PDF files and image resolutions remain intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking separately submitted collaborative proposals requires creating and sharing a PIN</td>
<td>Link separately submitted collaborative proposals with no PIN required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced automatic email notifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken together, these innovations address many of the common causes of proposals being returned without review, allowing proposers and program officers alike to focus more fully on proposal content.

Until FastLane proposal preparation is fully migrated to Research.gov, proposal types that have not yet been released in Research.gov and solicitations awaiting the updates necessary for migration, will continue to be available in FastLane. Submitting a proposal in Research.gov versus FastLane confers no advantage during review. A reviewer cannot distinguish which system was used to submit a given proposal.

**How-to Guides, Video Tutorials, and Other Help**
The Research.gov About Proposal Preparation and Submission page, accessible through About at the top of all Research.gov webpages, offers links to helpful materials supporting proposal preparation and submission. Included are current system capabilities, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) organized by topic, video tutorials, and how-to guides. This centralized menu of training resources supplements helpful links included throughout the Proposal Submission System pages. The Proposal Preparation Demo Site, accessible from a My Desktop link, lets you assume the role of PI to initiate and edit proposals, or experience compliance checking as you upload a document such as a Biographical Sketch or edit a budget. The Demo Site is one more tool to help smooth the learning curve.

**Add Your Voice**
Share your thoughts and suggestions with NSF, anonymously if you like, using the Feedback button in the Research.gov page footer. NSF considers your feedback in evaluating changes and identifying future improvements. For immediate assistance or technical questions, contact the NSF Help Desk 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday (except for federal holidays) at 1-800-381-1532 or rgov@nsf.gov.

**Webinars, Demonstrations, and More**
For an added transition boost, NSF is offering a limited number of small, interactive virtual sessions with in-depth demonstrations of the Research.gov Proposal Submission System and its companion demo site. If you are interested in participating, please send a request to rgovbusinessoffice@nsf.gov and include the organization’s name. If you have colleagues in your organization who are also interested in participating, please indicate the number of people when submitting your request.

To stay current on these and other impactful changes and innovations, NSF representatives will be presenting updates at many national and regional NCURA conferences in 2022. NSF also invites you to attend NSF ERA Forum webinars and NSF Grants Conferences. Details can be found at [www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/era_forum.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/era_forum.jsp) and [www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/outreach.jsp?region=regional](http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/outreach.jsp?region=regional).

**Reference**

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- Administrative Requirements Applicable to All Awards

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New Approach to Finnish Science Diplomacy in the US:

Opening Doors for Research and Business at the State-level

By Jérôme Rickmann

The Nordic countries seem to have it all – wealth, nature, trust in government, social support systems, and sustainable ways of living. When it comes to know-how in education, innovation, and sustainable lifestyles Northern European partners are highly valued and increasingly sought after. The new Nordic Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and an increasing number of new state-level partnerships with Finland are testament to this development.

This article highlights a current shift in Finnish-US science diplomacy and presents new opportunities for engagement and funding with this Nordic powerhouse and current leader in Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

A Paradigm Shift in Finnish-US Relations

In recent years Finland’s diplomacy has become more state-focused and is underpinned by a systematic, integrated, multi-stakeholder, and multi-level approach. The new approach increasingly coordinates the nation’s diplomatic efforts, key ministries, business organizations, the higher education sector, down to single research groups to work together with a large set of US stakeholders in a selected number of states. The states of Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, and most recently Washington have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Finland to increase collaboration in various areas of business, research and innovation.

Finland seeks to promote its globally recognized strengths in education and technological know-how; nature and sustainable development; and functionality and wellbeing. Key actors under the “Team Finland” umbrella – such as the Finnish Embassy in Washington, DC, and Business Finland’s offices in the US, collaborate for new Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) and business opportunities by connecting Finnish innovation ecosystems with state ecosystems and develop jointly long-term partnerships for a sustainable world. A good example is six joint working groups between key stakeholders in Michigan and Maine and Finland in areas relating to the broader theme “bioeconomy” such as “biorefining” or “smart forestry.”

New Opportunities for US Universities to Benefit from Finnish Approach

When looking for quality partners and collaborators in education and research, look no further: Finland’s national higher education system ranks #1 globally after GDP adjustment according to the latest Universitas 21 report. While concerted efforts in the US create new connections, the Finnish higher education sector, key funding bodies, and stakeholder organizations, such as the Fulbright Finland Foundation, increasingly align to create synergies. A key initiative was the inclusion of the US MoU-states as target regions into the “Global Program” launched by the Finnish Ministry for Education and Culture (MEC).

Aalto University and the University of Helsinki have subsequently been mandated by the MEC to jointly develop a large-scale Finnish RDI network to increase the visibility of the excellence of the Finnish RDI sector in Artificial Intelligence, 5G/6G wireless technologies, the new bioeconomy, and research and interventions in the area of inequalities, education, governance and broad citizen wellbeing in the US. Consequently, the Finnish-American Research and Innovation Accelerator (FARIA) was launched last year (www.faria.network). This young initiative is now starting to bear its first fruit.

In FARIA, 16 Finnish higher education institutions are collaborating: 12 universities and four universities of applied sciences. The members represent 92% of Finnish research universities and 89% of the higher education sector’s RDI-power when measured in terms of the RDI-funding. FARIA functions as a strategic US-focused platform, which integrates, aligns, and supports joint and associated actions of Finnish member institutions and collaborates closely with partners in the US MoU states and beyond.

More than 20 research projects with US collaborators have been initiated. The newest initiative is the launch of the FARIAincubator. FARI Ain incubator is a lightweight matching and preparation program to support US and Finnish researchers to apply as teams for joint funding calls by the Academy of Finland with the NSF and the NIH.

Call to Action

US universities can easily build connections with the Finnish higher education sector thanks to FARIA. FARIA coordinators are continuously interested in expanding the US-based network, especially to colleagues in research support services. Coordinators are seeking quality partners to establish new lines of communication which allow relevant Finnish and US peers to connect in the FARIAincubator and the scaling of this free service to support Finnish-US joint funding proposals.

FARIA is open for any US partnership inquiries, and welcomes you to explore opportunities to collaborate with the FARIA network (even if you are not based in a MoU state). 

Jérôme Rickmann, PhD, is Senior Advisor, Global Engagement, in Aalto University’s Leadership Support Services. He serves on Aalto University’s behalf as national development project lead for the Finnish-American Research & Innovation Accelerator (FARIA). He has worked for 15 years in higher education internationalization in Germany, Sweden and Finland. He can be reached at Jerome.rickmann@aalto.fi.
A Bigger Slice of the Pie: Research Administration at PUIs

By Linnea Minnema and Bruxanne El-Kammash

Our jobs as research administration professionals are nuanced and varied. Many of us like it this way. For those of us who really enjoy that variety, taking on the task of running the research administration enterprise for a public or private predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI) can be loaded with benefits. Every coin has two sides, however, and sometimes the joy of the variety can also feel like carrying a heavy burden. Too often we find ourselves as a “jack of all trades, master of none” with limited time and budgets to support the deep dive needed to become subject matter experts. Those of us in PUIs must also remain aware of and support our institution’s mission and focus. Even in PUIs this can vary widely depending on the institution. We will discuss both sides of this coin and offer some ideas to mitigate the stress of wearing too many hats (or eating too much pie!).

Think of research administration as a pie. Pre-award is a part of that pie, from funding searches to proposal development to compliance reviews to regulatory oversight to final submissions. Post-award contract negotiations, budget and account creation, accounting, compliance, financial reporting, and close-outs are all slices of the pie. Research Development, Technology Transfer, Export Control, Research Integrity—the list of slices is lengthy. Working at a PUI allows you to have your fingers in lots of slices of this diverse pie. We think of this as the role of a research administration “generalist.”

Working as a generalist and having the opportunity to “try a lot of pie,” you will discover some areas that fit best for you. You may learn that you love research development and working to formulate plans and goals or find that you would rather work with already funded projects. That would only come to you because being a research administration generalist gave you a chance to test out many slices of pie. Having this information allows you to then continue to build your research administration career, as professional opportunities will come your way due to your depth of experience and breadth of knowledge.

Unfortunately, your “pie in the sky” may not be sunny all of the time. Some burnt crusts will happen in the life of a generalist. By not being a subject matter expert in everything, it can be easy to fall into the mindset of not knowing enough about a particular area to make a difference. One example of this is contract negotiation. Unless you just enjoy keeping up with the developments in FAR clauses, indemnification, or intellectual property as a hobby, having a contract arrive on your desk can be very daunting. Similarly, it can feel like your knowledge in some areas becomes outdated quickly, as the profession and technology can grow and change rapidly. It is sometimes hard not to constantly feel like you are playing catch-up to a runaway freight train.

To address these challenges head-on, the first step is admitting there is no way you can possibly know everything. Nobody does. As a generalist, however, you have the advantage of knowing SOMETHING about the topic you are confronting. Maybe you don’t know the nuances of the FAR, but you do know what the FAR is, when it is used, and that it can require some specialized knowledge to work with it. That’s more than almost everyone else at your institution knows.

Your other big advantage is that you have a huge NCURA network of research administrators who do have specialized skills in this area. We can’t be afraid to ask questions, especially as generalists. NCURA has a wealth of resources to assist in your research administration journey no matter where you are: NCURA Magazine, guides and monographs, the Resource Center, the Career Center, podcasts, an informative YouTube channel, and Collaborate—you can connect within your region or across areas of interest in the online communities. For example, when researching policy, the first place you can go is the NCURA Collaborate site, where there is an entire section of policies for your information and use. If you have a more specific inquiry, you can direct it to the NCURA communities, made up of fellow research administrators who have answers and are ready to assist you with your questions.

Working as a generalist, and getting to taste a lot of the pie, is as rewarding as it is varied. It can feel like a heavy lift, but the benefits definitely outweigh the challenges.

Research Administration Pie

Linnea Minnema, MSM, CRA is the Director of Grants and Sponsored Programs at Samford University in Birmingham, AL. Prior to taking on the PUI role in 2016, she worked for the University of Notre Dame and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is a proud generalist and maintains her “OG CRA” status as proof. She can be reached at lminnema@samford.edu.

Bruxanne El-Kammash, EdS, CRA is newly a Pre-Award Research Administrator in University Research Administration at the University of Chicago. With 22 years in research administration, prior to this position she served as a Director of Research at both Georgia Southern University and Coastal Carolina University. While she has moved on from being a generalist, she will always retain her “OG CRA” status. She can be reached at bruxanne@uchicago.edu.
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

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https://onlinelearning.ncura.edu/read-and-explore
There are a lot of hurdles to jump on the way from the first spark of a research idea until the final research project with tangible results; there are even more hurdles when the research is pursued in a bigger group of researchers coming from different disciplines, institutions and countries. We can all agree on the added value of interdisciplinarity and international cooperation for the impact of research. But the process to achieve this can be rocky, especially when you add regulations of an external funding body. So, in the end, you can only accomplish the mission of an impactful research project if you connect the dots successfully along the way.

From the technical rules to the wider vision
Connecting the dots should be part of every research administrator’s job description; this should also be done without losing focus on the wider vision. European research funding (e.g., funding from the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation – Horizon Europe) seems to be so technical at first sight. There are all these different eligibility rules researchers must follow when applying. And while it’s important to have an eye for details like filling out the templates correctly, keeping the deadlines, calculating the budget, and forming the consortia with the right mix of partners, you shouldn’t lose sight of the greater good behind the funding. As a research administrator, you must bridge the gap between vision and reality.

The funding programmes offered by the European Union are very political programmes. And while researchers are often far away from policies and governmental strategies, as a research administrator, we need to remind them of the underlying political priorities and key strategic orientations. We need to bring the project to a higher level as taxpayers’ money should be used for the taxpayers’ good.

Talent and a global view as success factor
Next to politicising research, research administrators also need to cover another important dot to accomplish the mission: talent. Nurturing talent is your pre-investment in future successes and builds the basis for a long-term effect. Awareness raising for the match-rules of pursuing research never can start too early in a research career. Nowadays every university offers tailor-made programs for its postdoc or PhD community and rightly so. With the European Talent Academy, the Technical University of Munich (TUM) launched a programme for highly talented postdoctoral researchers. The two main objectives of the Academy are 1) to create a research community of peers, and 2) to raise awareness of EU policies and funding opportunities. It should help young researchers to understand the realities of research at an early stage.

For this program, TUM decided to team up with two of their strategic international partners: Imperial College London and Politecnico di Milano.

This brings another important element to the table: the international dimension. Research is spurred through internationalization, and by intertwining the two strategies, universities and their research administrators can increase impact. Meeting their international peers with different institutional and cultural backgrounds adds another element to the awareness of different realities.

Collaborating in a trustful environment
Sharing your research ideas with partners is not straightforward. Different research cultures and approaches come with different values and use of results. Within Europe we are in a privileged situation in that a certain set of values like academic freedom is widely shared. The European Union is emphasizing this with its concept of a European Research Area, sometimes more and sometimes less successful. But even in the scenario that certain ground rules should be guaranteed, open cooperation is not always easy. As an institution, you can support your scientist with selecting several strategic partners offering a trustful environment with a joint mission and vision and institutional support. Through an internationalization strategy, the university can offer a set of go-to partners for its research community where complementary strengths are identified.

Since 2011, TUM is partner in the EuroTech University Alliance, a strategic partnership of six Universities of Science and Technology from Europe and Israel. The partners join forces to build a strong, sustainable, sovereign, and
resilient Europe. Together they aspire to accelerate their research in high-tech focus areas and advocate for change. EuroTech is just one of these examples, where universities decided to enter a partnership for the sake of impactful research cooperation. Based on a clear institutional strategy and supported by activities and incentives (covering a span from a professorship program to grant writing support), the research community of six partners is offered a sphere of trust, where collaboration is almost natural, and many challenges are solved by default.

Next to the EuroTech Universities Alliances and the TUM Brussels branch, TUM has a wider global engagement network with branches around the world. This offers the scientists anchor points in different research markets and helps them to explore research ties to different regions worldwide.

**A hub successfully connecting the dots**

So, what are the ingredients of success you must have to facilitate impact through research? As a research administrator, you need to act as a hub connecting four dots: 1) The wider vision that goes beyond single research results, 2) nurturing talent in raising awareness at an early stage, 3) building a network of like-minded international partners to offer, and 4) a sphere of trust to the research community. With those four elements along with motivation, endurance, and a positive spirit to guide you through the obstacles along the way, you will be able to accomplish the mission.

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**Maria-Valerie Schegk** works as Senior Manager European Affairs for the Technical University of Munich. In this function she has represented the University in its Brussels branch since 2014. Her responsibilities include the facilitation and support of European research collaboration as well as building and maintaining crucial relationships with the EU institutions and monitoring their activities covering the whole knowledge triangle. She can be reached via schegk@zv.tum.de.
NCURA's Peer Programs continues to offer both Peer Reviews and Peer Advisory Services despite the current environment, travel difficulties, and restrictions! We are pleased to let you know that we are able to conduct reviews and provide advisory services incorporating virtual site visits. You get the same outside perspective institutions have come to expect from Peer Review: recommendations for the future from fellow research administrators, based on their conversations with your stakeholders and an in-depth review of background materials. Our recommendations, as always, are specific to your institution and its culture, needs, and interests.

PEERREVIEW@NCURA.EDU
HTTPS://WWW.NCURA.EDU/INSTITUTIONALPROGRAMS.ASPX
We have seen more historically Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) appoint non-traditional, minority leaders in recent years. During the 2020-2021 school year, we have seen more minority leaders being named to executive leadership roles more than ever before, particularly at major universities. Historically, university and college leaders have been predominantly White, heterosexual, Christian males. We must acknowledge this dynamic shift within the higher education industry. This is a clear indicator of the progress made by many civil rights organizations and activists dating back to the civil rights era of the 1960s. However, much more work is needed to continue educating, championing change, creating safe spaces for professionally courageous conversations, and establishing cultural norms to call out "toxic" behavior without reprise.

With diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives catching fire across the country, many institutions of higher education (IHEs) have erected entire offices, leadership or officer positions, and task forces to address DEI through education and awareness. In addition, courageous conversations were happening throughout IHEs across all landscapes. Many IHEs became aware of the existing inequities, and they were being challenged to do something to address them. One outcome from this work was the apparent need for dedicated resources to assess, plan, and execute specific educational needs and evaluate cultural (behaviors) and systems that may perpetuate inequality and inequity in the workforce. There are now more DEI-related positions at the executive or c-suite level at universities across the globe that will ensure institutional training, opportunities for dialogue, and institutional policies and practices that support university values around DEI.

Unthreading the fabric that has garmented “Higher Education” for a couple of centuries can be challenging. Peeling back the layers of historical inequity and systemic oppression at our beloved institutions can be painful. Often, we celebrate the news of significant milestones, marveling at the symbols of progression they represent but often glaze over the opportunities for further exploration. For example, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, named its first Black president in the school’s 250-year history on July 1, 2020. It was a very proud and historical moment for the University and state of New Jersey; however, we must ask why it has been so long?

To put this into perspective, it has been roughly 160 years since slaves were freed in 1865, 130 years since Rutgers graduated its first Black student (Carr, 1892), and nearly 60 years since the Civil Rights Act of 1964. So, yes, when considering the overall accomplishment with the amount of progress the U.S. has made over many issues, we must applaud ourselves. Nevertheless, we must inquire about what has happened in the last 250 years that has not permitted another member who may be Black, female, homosexual, or a person of color from becoming the president of this great institution in merely the last ten, twenty-five, or fifty years. Without asking these questions and assessing societal or institutional cultural norms, we bask in the historically relevant moment far too long and forget to ask these fundamental questions.

When addressing systemic oppression, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been a hot topic in politics and education for some time. CRT origins began at Harvard University in the 1980s. It can be defined as talking openly about how America’s history has influenced our society, systems, and institutions today. The debate whether it should be taught in public schools to children or not continues to be had across political party lines. However, CRT argues that the institutions within American society were initially designed to serve, protect, and empower its citizens. Race is an integral part of this theory as Blacks were not originally thought to be citizens, or rather even human beings. CRT was birthed in reaction to critical legal studies, which came about in the 1970s, that aimed to dissect the idea that law was just and neutral. Those included or defined as citizens in these systems created hundreds of years ago within the law are indeed not who they represent today. Overall, the relinquishment of this privilege and power is where the
commitment. Diversity brings immeasurable benefits, including expanded racial and cultural awareness, enhanced critical thinking, and emotional and cultural intelligence, resulting in higher service levels for the research community. However, other elements—equity and inclusion—are vital to broadly delivering on diversity’s pledge in higher education. This top-down approach is possible due to the new faces of leadership that commit to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability initiatives. Many of these new faces emerged through intentional DEI hiring practices. As a result, they understand the vital importance of this intentional efforts resulted in more diversity of the candidates brought in for interviews and those ultimately hired.

2. Training & Education—Think about DEI’s work as mission-critical. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the base of the mission of most higher education institutions, specifically for public colleges and universities. When DEI is mission-critical, it becomes part of everyday institutional problem-solving, decision-making, and day-to-day operations.

3. Top-Down—Focus on and institutionalize DEI as an essential skill. As a foundational principle, DEI must extend beyond an institution’s existing lineup of leaders. To achieve this goal, it is essential that DEI remains a core value for the institution, be a distinctly expressed competency in job descriptions, and be integrated into institutional leader retreats and learning experiences.

4. Intertwine, Institution Fabric—Mandate DEI as an institutional responsibility. For institutions serious about instilling DEI throughout their communities, including the ever-expanding research community, DEI must serve as a critical function for all offices, schools, colleges, and units. Institutions with a crucial focus toward DEI will ensure that senior-level executives, college and school deans, faculty, and research community understand equity-mindedness and equity-embedded student and employee success.

Diversity is the array of differences that make a community or individuals unique, both seen and unseen. Equity means understanding we all have different needs to get to the starting line. Inclusion means creating an environment that engages multiple perspectives, other ideas, and individuals to define organizational culture. All require a deeply rooted commitment to actualize and succeed. Diversity, equity, and inclusion require respect, and until we are intentional in our effort to respect everyone, change will remain a discussion.

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What is Critical Race Theory (n.d.). www.endasianhate.org/critical-race-theory/gclid=EAIaIQobChMIwtaahuaC19QIV99BpCh3Q0AAnEAYAAAEgKisFD_BwE

Lamar K. Oglesby is the Executive Director of Research Financial Services for the Office for Research at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Lamar is a thought-leader and graduate of NCURA’s Executive Leadership Program. He is the former chair of NCURA Collaborate, current Auditor’s travel workshop faculty member, and current Chair-Elect for Region II. He can be reached at lamar.oglesby@rutgers.edu

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NSF OIG CORNER

Promising Practices for Award Management

Over the past 3 years, an independent public accounting firm that conducts audits of NSF award recipients on our behalf has been observing, identifying, and cataloging strengths and opportunities for improvement within each recipient’s award management environment. We recently published a capstone report based on this body of work, Promising Practices for NSF Award Management, which suggests ways to improve controls in areas that often result in audit findings. In this article, we’ll go over some of the common findings and promising practices described in the capstone report.

By Ken Lish and Billy McCain

Common Findings
The most common audit findings at the institutions we audited included:

- **Unallowable expenses** — We identified costs related to unallowable travel, participant support, salary, material/supply, fringe benefit, publication, consultant, and subaward costs to NSF awards.
- **Inappropriately applied indirect costs** — Recipients did not always apply indirect costs to the appropriate Modified Total Direct Cost base and did not apply indirect costs at the rates approved within the recipient’s Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements.
- **Inadequately supported expenses** — Recipients did not always maintain sufficient evidence to support that costs claimed in NSF’s Award Cash Management Service, costs billed by internal service providers, and travel, salary, and consultant costs charged to NSF awards were allowable per federal and NSF regulations.
- **Inappropriately allocated expenses** — We identified instances where recipients inappropriately allocated travel, materials and supplies, publication, and student stipend or tuition costs to NSF awards.
- **Non-compliance with policies and procedures** — Recipients did not always comply with, or did not document their compliance with, organization and NSF program-specific policies and procedures.

Promising Practices
The capstone report identifies promising practices that could help decrease the likelihood of recipient non-compliance with federal and NSF criteria, as well as improve the stewardship of federal funds:

- **Continually monitor and verify the allowability of high-risk expenses.** Recipients were less likely to charge unallowable costs to NSF awards if they implemented processes for the continuous monitoring of high-risk expenses, rather than waiting until after the award expired to review the allowability of the expenses.
- **Strengthen controls over applying indirect cost rates.** For example, recipients could implement controls to identify when indirect cost rates change between the proposal submission date and the award date, and establish guidance identifying the appropriate indirect cost rate for sponsored projects awarded during provisional rate periods.
- **Ensure recipients create and maintain sufficient, appropriate documentation.** Recipients with more robust requirements for documentation creation and retention were more likely to maintain sufficient, appropriate documentation to support that expenses charged to NSF awards were reasonable, allocable, and allowable.
- **Document and justify reasonable allocation methodologies.** Recipients that require personnel to document and justify reasonable allocation methodologies when purchasing goods and services were more likely to maintain sufficient documentation to support that they had allocated sampled expenses to NSF awards consistent with the relative benefits received by those awards.
- **Regularly review and update grant management policies and procedures.** Recipients would have benefited from reviewing and updating their grant management practices on a regular basis. Many noted that the policies cited in the audit reports did not accurately reflect their current procedures or they were already in the process of updating the cited policies and procedures.

The capstone report also includes examples of common sub-findings with suggestions for strengthening controls; promising practices being used by recipients; and a glossary of federal and NSF criteria.

We hope the capstone report will serve as a reference for NSF’s recipient community to consider when evaluating its own policies. We encourage community members to review the full report on our website at https://oig.nsf.gov/reports-publications/reports/audit.

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With several years of preceding work experience in corporates, I joined Ahmedabad University five years ago to contribute to its vision: “To become a World Class Research University.” I work with the Dean of Graduate School and Research and assist him in coordinating research-related tasks for all schools and centres at the university. I provide administrative support for the entire life cycle of research, some of which includes introducing the faculty to the various processes and policies of research, facilitating them with a platform for managing internal and external grants, handling research-related queries, and updating and managing data needed for the submission of research proposals to external agencies.

Since the inception of Ahmedabad University in 2009, it has been growing rapidly, and today it is a go-to place for higher education and research in Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad University is a research university that is truly dedicated to rigorous academic pursuit with a focus on building enquiry as a value through interdisciplinary learning. Ahmedabad University is committed to the discovery, exploration, and implementation of new ideas and to the belief that good theory results in good practice.

At present, Ahmedabad University has five schools: Amrut Mody School of Management, School of Arts and Sciences, School of Engineering and Applied Science, Graduate School, and the Undergraduate College. Ahmedabad University also has four research centres: Centre for Heritage Management, Centre for Learning Futures, and the Global Centre for Environment and Energy and Centre for Inter-Asian Research. All schools and centres emphasize interdisciplinary, research-based teaching aimed at fostering a spirit of innovation and discovery. Venture Studio is a centre for enterprise design that was established to incubate start-ups and to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ahmedabad.

Ahmedabad University plans to school 5000 students (3000 undergraduates and 2000 graduate students) and expand with 400 faculty members over the next ten years (from a current strength of about 3000 students and over 150 faculty members). Various unique programmes have been designed with the help of expert faculty to promote early career researchers including undergraduates, masters and PhD students. The distinctive Undergraduate Research Programme (UGRP) provides an opportunity for undergraduates to be engaged in research projects with faculty and experience the joy of research.

In a very short time, Ahmedabad University has achieved exemplary growth in research. I would like to share the success story of research at Ahmedabad University under three categories: research governance, research administration, and automation and e-management.

**STAGE 1: Research Governance**

Every institution requires a well synchronized strategy with a number of complementary initiatives designed to create an ecosystem that supports generation and dissemination of high-quality academic research. In 2016, an apex body, the University Research Board (URB), was established to develop a university-wide research policy and oversee its implementation. Broadly, the objective of the URB is to support, encourage, promote, and
enable the conduct and dissemination of research by faculty, students, and other academic staff. The University Research policy provides guidance and clarity on the functioning of the University Research Board and a framework for research at Ahmedabad University.

The University offers several different types of internal grants to support faculty research. These include seed grants to initiate preliminary research, start-up grants to newly-appointed faculty for funding the setup required for their research, and the University Challenge grant for promoting interdisciplinary research. The University also offers financial support for faculty participation in national and international conferences. These internal funding initiatives provide the impetus for our faculty to develop larger programs.

The UR also drives the faculty across different schools to apply for research grants from external agencies both within the country and abroad as well as from industry. The different schools strongly believe that the solution to all complex problems require multiple systems of knowledge, and this may come from the remotest of disciplines. Hence, the UR holds brainstorming sessions with the faculty to learn about their findings and support them in their endeavours.

The University Research Board meeting is held once a month. I collate all the proposals submitted by faculty of the schools and circulate it in time for the monthly meetings for further approval. The UR reviews the proposals and if need be, recommends modifications in the proposal to be submitted to external agencies. I prepare minutes of the meetings and communicate the decision of the UR to the faculty regarding approval, suggestions, and any other alterations. I have observed that the suggestions of the UR have helped many faculty in receiving grants from renowned external agencies as well as from internal funds of Ahmedabad University.

**STAGE 2: Research Administration**

In August 2019, the University Grants Office was established under the aegis of the University Research Board (URB). This office was set up with the goal of centralizing grant-related functions of the University and to support the University as well as individual researchers in obtaining and managing grants from external agencies.

The faculty receive extensive support from the University Grants Office. We publish a quarterly Research Horizons Newsletter comprised of success stories of research by faculty and students, national and international funding opportunities, and any other research-related news. We share with faculty a monthly compendium comprised of national and international funding opportunities. We also organize research seminars or webinars, talks by experts, and workshops.

These activities focus on enhancing proposal writing skills of the faculty, converting their innovative ideas into proposals, and sharing research implementation techniques as well as the best research practices followed globally. For example, we recognized the need to raise awareness of funding opportunities and processes in the area of social sciences for our researchers.

During the time of the pandemic, we organized an online workshop on funding opportunities via the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). We were delighted to see that, in a first for Ahmedabad University, some faculty applied to the grants offered by ICSSR. We also arranged a workshop on grant writing specifically for the early career researchers, which encouraged some faculty to write proposals for external as well as internal funding. We have received feedback from the faculty that newsletters, compendium, webinars, and workshops have helped spread more awareness of different national and international funding opportunities.

Each year, the number of proposals submitted by our faculty to external agencies as well as for internal funding is increasing. In 2019, the majority of proposals being submitted by our investigators were written as single-investigator proposals. I now see our faculty sitting together, brainstorming on collaborative proposals. Recently several faculty have submitted multidisciplinary proposals and proposals that require experts from both industry and academia. As we now look back at the nature of the proposals being submitted in the recent years, we see a steady increase in the number of proposals written by our faculty in collaboration with co-investigators, both from India and overseas.

**STAGE 3: Automation and e-Management**

To facilitate e-management of the grants and grants-related documents from end to end, a new grants portal was launched in October 2019. Prior to the launch of this portal, our faculty members faced several challenges in managing grants, such as excessive paperwork, having to coordinate with different departments via emails and phone calls and the lack of a single place to archive and access grant-related documents. We realized that this was becoming a common problem for all the faculty. We ran group-thinking sessions with URB members, heads of different departments, and faculty from different disciplines. Those sessions helped us in creating a system which addressed all the major concerns faced by our faculty. The launch of the grants portal was done in different phases. Each phase introduced enhanced and additional features for the smooth functioning and management of grants.

The grants portal is now used for routing proposals from faculty to members of the University Research Board for consideration, feedback, and approval. The portal incorporates features such as uploading of documents, approval from the Deans of Schools, recording URB decisions, and archiving submitted proposals for both internal and external funding. The portal also allows faculty to view the budget utilization details for their grants and has a feature of sending auto-reminders to the awardees before the due date for submission of progress reports and closure reports.

During the pandemic, the grants portal demonstrated its value in aiding the smooth functioning of research at the University. The portal works across the all schools and centers of the University. Faculty can connect with the University Grants Office, finance department, and procurement department with the help of this portal.

We are proud to say our faculty are working on various externally funded research projects from esteemed funding agencies such as Department of Science and Technology, Science and Engineering Research Board, Department of Biotechnology, Spencer Foundation, Social Science Research Council (USA), National Science Foundation (USA), Wildlife Conservation Society (USA), British Academy and the J-PAL initiative.

**Accreditations related to research received by Ahmedabad University so far:**

Nowadays many funding agencies require that the University is accredited by specific agencies before faculty members will be eligible to apply for grant funding. Over the last few years, Ahmedabad University has received accreditation and recognition from the following key agencies, which are crucial for our grant applications to external agencies:

**SIRO recognition**

In November 2019, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India confirmed registration of Ahmedabad University as a Research Institute under Recognition under Section 12B of the UGC Act.

In September 2021, the University Grants Commission (UGC) approved the proposal from Ahmedabad University for recognition under Section 12B. The inclusion of Ahmedabad University by the UGC in the list of Universities approved under Section 12B of the UGC Act makes Ahmedabad
Focusing on Institutional Goals

In these challenging times it can be difficult to focus with so many competing priorities, multiple hurdles, and handicaps. Given current COVID-related restrictions and resulting workforce issues, new funding agency requirements and guidance, supply chain limitations, and budget concerns, it is more important than ever for institutions to develop and implement strategic decision-making processes.

A notable practice often recommended to institutions to help them focus on institutional goals is to consider mission critical areas as pillars. These pillars together uphold the institution and enable institutions to strive for excellence. Within each pillar exists the framework to build connectivity between the pillars and support the entire institution.

Some examples of research administration major pillars include proposal development, award management, information management systems, training, and compliance. Strength and integrity in each of these areas requires attention to factors including:

- Well developed and respected leadership and governance models;
- Clear policies and consistent practices;
- Role and responsibility matrix to ensure all components are efficiently and effectively addressed while also minimizing (if not eliminating) redundancies;
- Workforce and infrastructure support, including support for information management and reporting;
- Connectivity and communication between related areas;
- Monitoring for measures of success, which is documented by data driven reports;
- Continuous process improvement; and
- Accountability for non-compliance and fair due process for adjudication.

Within each pillar, institutions must identify strengths and opportunities. It is also important to weigh the risks and benefits as the institution works toward maintaining balance and building connectivity between the pillars.

A current research administration challenge that spans across potential pillars is the heightened concern of federal agencies for reporting “other support.” To ensure compliance, institutions must have the systems in place, train the research community, and develop proposals appropriately. For institutions to stay focused on the integrity and balance needed for a strong research administration program, they must reconcile this reporting requirement with information disclosed in outside activity reports and publications.

By utilizing this notable practice and focusing on the factors listed above, institutions can look to their institutional pillars and identify the priority actions needed to address this challenge.

Lois Brako, PhD, is the current vice chair of the Select Committee on Peer Review. In late 2021, she retired from her position as Assistant Vice President for Research - Regulatory and Compliance Oversight, University of Michigan, after a career of more than 30 years in research administration. She can be reached at lbrako@umich.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.

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University eligible to receive central assistance from UGC and other funding agencies such as ICSSR.

Centre of Excellence (CoE)

In January 2022, the Gujarat Government accorded Centre of Excellence (CoE) status to Ahmedabad University. Ahmedabad is one amongst the seven institutions awarded this rare recognition. This is a privilege which will open several opportunities for research for the benefit of society and for the University to partner with organisations globally.

Being a young university, it was challenging for us to receive all the above accreditations in a short period. The Internal Quality Assurance Cell team at Ahmedabad University coordinated with different schools and centres to collect and analyze various data. The grants office provided all documents related to research at the University, which included ongoing and completed research proposals, grants award certificates, funding information, research equipment and research facilities. This activity helped our office create processes for maintaining a dynamic and updated database of facts and figures pertaining to research at the university.

The Way Ahead:

As the title of my article indicates, we have done what we dreamt of, but there is a lot more to do and achieve. We look forward to bringing more innovation in research administration to achieve the following objectives:

- More joint proposals with other academic institutes and research organizations;
- Enhancing global linkage by organizing international conferences, inviting distinguished seminar speakers, and promoting student and faculty exchange programmes;
- Involving industry in formulating research proposals; and
- More focus on interdisciplinary collaborations.

In the end, I would like to say anything that is planned, implemented, monitored, and controlled always results in growth and success. I feel privileged to have been part of this growth story and look forward to seeing research administration at Ahmedabad University evolve further.

Acknowledgement

I would like to extend my humble thanks to:
Professor Pankaj Chandra–Vice Chancellor, Ahmedabad University, for being a visionary leader, a mentor, and a motivator to promote and adapt the research culture at Ahmedabad University;
Professor Deepak Kunzru–Dean of Graduate School and Research, Ahmedabad University, for his in-depth analysis and accuracy in planning and execution to accomplish the research mission and vision of the University.
He has always been a great supporter, advisor, and instructor who has taught me a lot about research administration; and
Dr. Savita Ayyar–Research Management Consultant, Jaquaranda Tree, for being an excellent mentor, motivator, planner, manager, guide at every step, and helping in streamlining the research office at Ahmedabad University.
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With an employment landscape that continues to evolve with no apparent abatement as we enter the third year of a global pandemic, the field of research administration has not escaped the labor shortages prevalent in other markets. A December 2021 editorial in the Wall Street Journal noted that while COVID has accelerated changes already underway, such as remote work, it has also brought about other potentially lasting changes (Galston, 2021). The article notes that the pandemic sharply reversed steady increases of older Americans in the workforce and prompted an increase in younger workers opting to stay at home, whether due to concern for unvaccinated children or better quality of family life. The result is 2.4 million fewer Americans in the labor force than before the pandemic; employers engaged in bidding wars for staff; and rapidly rising salaries, which are forecast to accelerate in 2022. Following upward trends, quitting rates reached record highs in November 2021 when more than 4.5 million people in the U.S. left their jobs voluntarily, in part due to opportunities for better pay and benefits (Goldberg, 2022). In the current environment, recruiting qualified staff and retaining staff with institutional knowledge is challenging but critical.

Universities have long competed for researchers and research dollars. In the current environment, competition for human capital essential to support research has, anecdotally, also increased. The pools of qualified candidates for skilled administrative positions are dwindling, salaries are increasing, and counteroffers (“bidding wars”) are prevalent. In addition, the ability to work remotely at some institutions is breaking down barriers to job change, and flexibilities and remote work opportunities can trump traditional salary and benefits packages. These trends, coupled with continued growth in demand and funding for research, are leading to an erosion of support for research at our nation’s universities (Gibbons, 2021).

Jill Mortali, Director, Office of Sponsored Projects, at Dartmouth College noted, “From what we have experienced, the factors contributing to staffing shortages and the shift to remote work are amplified in research administration. For decades, our office experienced low turnover. A significant portion of the team had been in the office for 15 or more years. While we were able to adapt quickly and successfully to remote work, no one anticipated how long it would continue or the possibility that it would never end. While we knew we were facing a ‘cliff’ associated [with] a wave of retiring staff, early retirement incentives accelerated and ‘snowballed’ the departures as staff moved to fill positions vacated by retirees in other areas. Availability

By Lisa Nichols, Carpantato Myles, Marianne Achenbach, and Jill Mortali
of child-care has reached a crisis point in the area, resulting in some younger workers having no, or limited, options to work full-time. Filling vacant positions has proven challenging due to the high volume of openings and competition. The silver lining is that the team has really stepped forward in sharing work, learning new areas, and breaking down silos. We are compelled to be creative, adaptive, and flexible, skills that will serve us well in the present and future, wherever it takes us.”

High turnover and staff shortages can result in delays in processing incoming awards and subawards, managing collaborations, and exchanging materials and data, as well as lead to reporting delays and compliance concerns. Although proposals will generally be submitted, oversight that jeopardizes funding could increase. What approaches can institutions take in the current environment to recruit and retain research administrative staff?

A study by Welch and Brantmeier (2021) specific to research administrators provides some insights into why staff choose to stay or leave. A caveat is that the underlying survey was conducted in February 2020, just prior to the start of lockdown, and does not account for trends accelerated or resulting from the pandemic. The authors found that the top four motivating factors for staff remaining with current employers were 

- supervisor and upper management support, adequate compensation and benefits, good work/life balance, and positive relationship with coworkers. Respondents were also motivated to remain by tuition benefits as well as location, and the need to relocate or change their commute when taking another position—issues that would be alleviated in remote work environments. In terms of factors motivating staff to leave a current employer, lack of support from supervisor and upper management was ranked as “extremely important” by 54% of respondents and feeling undervalued by 48%. The authors cite several studies indicating that poor job satisfaction is a significant factor for voluntary turnover, and opportunities for career growth, professional development, work-life balance, and flexible work schedules are motivating factors for retention.

A recent column in The Economist offered several approaches to retention (How to manage, 2021). The column suggests systematically gauging retention risk via “stay interviews,” identifying where cuts have taken place and staff may be experiencing burnout, and understanding one’s vulnerability to other employers. In addition, the column suggests pulling different levers for retention, including salary for lower wage workers and flexible schedules for those with dependents. Finally, the column suggests that managers should plan approaches to finding new workers, including relaxing qualifications for retention.

Remote Work and Flexibilities

Before the pandemic, almost 75% of employees in the workforce had never worked from home and under 6% worked primarily in a remote setting (Coate, 2021). However, the level of employees working remotely during the initial phase of the pandemic increased to more than 33% (2021). Furthermore, a January 2022 article in The Economist noted that “about 15% of full-time workers are expected to be fully remote in the future and just under a third to work in a ‘hybrid’ situation, up from 5% prior to the pandemic” (Will remote work, 2022). In addition, about 15% of workers “say they would definitely or probably leave employers who do not offer remote options.”

Opportunities for fully remote work provide employers with the potential to recruit from any state. Consideration may include the need to license in other states. Training staff while fully remote can be challenging, particularly for less experienced staff. Strong oversight that includes metrics and quality control can prove necessary to ensure accurate and timely completion of work and equitable work environments.

A question around permanent telework arrangements is whether perceived ties to the employer are diminished. Healthy and supportive working conditions may balance the lack of physical ties to people and places. Hybrid models and flexibility may also help to retain current, local staff, including opportunities for remote work during summer or holiday periods.

Compensation

A consideration for institutions is whether to pay the costs of turnover and recruitment or raise existing salaries to retain current staff. If staff are leaving for higher wages and institutions lose possible recruits to strong counteroffers, wages may be too low for the current environment. Although time and market dependent, a consideration is whether institutions can afford prolonged periods of understaffing, given its impact on research and operations. Failure to be nimble could be costly, but the costs need to be balanced with the long-term sustainability of higher salaried positions. The balance of salaries versus benefits is another consideration.

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Remote Work and Flexibilities

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“...recruiting qualified staff and retaining staff with institutional knowledge is challenging but critical.”

Adjusting Expectations for Hiring

Prior to the pandemic, institutions may have received as many as a hundred applications to fill one open position. Today institutions are struggling to fill research administration positions and may receive as few as 1-3 applicants, often from individuals with little relevant experience. Reducing expectations and relaxing qualifications may be necessary to fill open positions. A study by Landen and McCallister (2006) found that 50% of research administrators applied for positions without prior experience. Hiring applicants with fewer qualifications, including current students and recent graduates, and providing hands-on training, can broaden the hiring pool and provide opportunities to keep salaries in check.

Staff from other industries or backgrounds can be trained informally or through formal research administration programs, including homegrown programs. The latter tend to produce small numbers of research administrative staff that generally fail to meet demand, raising questions of whether an expansion of these programs would be beneficial and what optimal length of training they should offer. Once staff are trained, staff retention again becomes a concern.
Talent Management
Given current hiring pools, the need for institutions and companies to “upskill” and “reskill” employees will be paramount for 2022 and beyond. An article from Human Resources Online (Sunil, 2022), suggests that “rather than just looking into the external candidate pool when trying to find talent, many companies are now identifying skills, experiences, and qualifications from internal and external sources to find the right fit for open positions.” A central aspect is assessing the current balance of needs and skills and, when lacking, encouraging employees to upskill.

Many long-term employees came into their roles in research administration through promotions from other roles within their organization, from administrative assistants to research lab technicians, or any number of other positions. On-the-job training and mentoring were the norm for how one learned this business. As these employees begin to retire, who is in the pipeline to readily step in and fill these roles? The landscape is changing as the complexity of the work continues to increase and demand for skilled staff has outpaced supply.

Certification and master’s programs are now more readily available, but many individuals may not have the time or funding to pursue these programs. There is a prevalent need for institutions to do more by way of training within their ecosystems. The situation is ripe for institutions to put comprehensive programs in place to upskill and reskill their employees. Employees want opportunities for growth. Investing the time and attention necessary for professional development and career progression will foster retention. Programs can focus at the beginner research administrator level, providing a feeder pipeline for higher level roles. As Dick Seligman, recently retired Associate Vice President for Research Administration at Caltech noted, “There is certainly evidence, anecdotal, that staff who enter the profession at entry-level positions and are trained internally can become highly effective research administrators. This would argue for filling positions at lower levels and ‘training up.’ The strong desire of prospective staff to work entirely remotely [introduces challenges to this] approach.”

Employers must be creative when circumstances combine a remote setting with the need to train staff with fewer qualifications. What works in an office setting does not naturally translate to a remote environment. There is the loss of the side-by-side training that has customarily been available. When training individuals with limited or no experience in research administration, it is critical that the employer attempt to build relationships through other forms of engagement such as online events and activities.

Conclusion
Changes wrought by the pandemic over the last few years have required that higher education institutions rethink recruitment and retention strategies, as more senior research administrators retire and younger, skilled staff are presented with competing opportunities at other institutions. Senior research administrators need to consider how the changing work environment may require adjustments to policies, recruitment strategies, compensation, and training. Providing employees with flexible workplace and scheduling options, and opportunities for professional development and career growth, will place institutions at an advantage.

References

Marianne Achenbach is the Executive Director, Office of Research Support Services, and Entity Privacy Officer/HIPAA Compliance in the Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, where she has worked for more than 40 years. She can be reached at achenbac@pennmedicine.upenn.edu.

Jill Mortali is Director, Office of Sponsored Projects, Dartmouth College, overseeing a combined pre- and post-award office that serves all of Dartmouth including the Medical School, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering. Jill can be reached at jill.j.mortali@dartmouth.edu.

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A visionary SRO has an unique opportunity to implement changes that could transform their institution’s research enterprise for generations. However, the SRO also has an immense responsibility for ensuring that the research conducted at their institution is compliant with all legal and regulatory requirements.

This three-part series from NCURA should be required viewing for all SROs, whether new to the role or a bit more seasoned, to help them fully understand how, and the degree to which, their vision for excellence in research depends upon excellence in research administration.

Craig A. Reynolds
Assistant Vice President for Research – Sponsored Projects
Office of Research and Sponsored Projects (ORSP) | University of Michigan

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While research administration management as a profession is well established in developed countries like the United States of America (U.S.) and the United Kingdom (U.K.), in other parts of the world, especially in developing countries like Brazil it is still crawling along. In the U.S., scientists are recognized for their accomplishments in key fields and science is highly-esteemed among citizens and professionals (Funk et al., 2020): 48% of Americans believe it is important to increase the gross domestic product (GDP) spent on science and nearly 90% say it is important for the U.S. to be a global leader in health and scientific research (Research!America, 2021). Thus, public opinion can be viewed as an extra support and an indicator about the already preeminent American research scenario. Meanwhile, Brazil stands at 62nd in the global innovation index (Cornell University, INSEAD, and WIPO, 2020). This article briefly talks about the importance of research administration shaping itself as a profession in the country, the benefits it could bring about, and how it could help redefine the path of scientific research in Brazil as well as potentialize partnerships.

It is widely known that professional scientific research administration brings more investments, brings cutting edge innovation into the market, creates jobs, accelerates scientific advances, increases patent deposit, attracts partnership with other institutions and industry, stimulates entrepreneurship, and opens up the horizons for researchers, grad students, and STEM professionals. It is also well-known that in industrialized countries, private sources are becoming the main R&D funding. Economic incentives, knowledge-based economies, competition: the innovation race is accelerated because no one wants to be left behind in the market.

The U.S., with top-performing institutions like Harvard University, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the National Institutes of Health (Crew, 2019) ranks #1 in scientific breakthroughs (Nature Index, 2020) with over eleven million (11,986,435) citable documents (SCImago, n.d.), 50% research in natural sciences, and an investment of over $600 billion a year, resulting in a scientific output of approximately 36% (Crew, 2019) of the global research. These are striking numbers even with some current disinvestment and China’s upfront competition. But in developing countries, despite all the known benefits professional research administration can bring about, the scientific scenario presents signs of an amateur administration still strongly influenced by structural, cultural, and historic factors. The recognition and establishment of research administration as a profession and tool could help eliminate these setbacks and potentialize all known benefits.

To start with, what is the research administration scenario in Brazil? According to Kerridge and Scott (2018-2019), table 1 (page 5), “Confidence Levels for Each RMA Association with Desired and Actual Response Rates,” the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) has 7,312 members, whereas the Brazilian Administrators and Research Management Association (BRAMA) counts on less than one hundred members, with an update of 7 members in December 2021. What might these numbers be telling us?

- **BRAMA**, Brazilian Research Managers Administration was founded in 2015 and the NCURA in 1959. In the U.S., American professionals recognize professional associations’ role in professional development, awareness and leadership. Culturally, the same is not true for Brazilian professionals.
- The language used in science and scientific research is English. According to the English Fluency Index 2021, Brazil is 60th in the rankings. Without fluency in English, research administration tends to have more of a domestic profile, restricting international and industry collaboration, since most research investment is made through headquarters abroad, where the R&D departments are. To that, we can add that even in the academic environment, it is not common for Ph.D. theses to be defended in English. It was only between 2005-2009 that The University of Sao Paulo (USP) allowed defenses
in English, which is another factor that limits scientific work visibility and collaboration with scientific advisors from other countries (Universidade de São Paulo, 2015).

- Researchers undertake scientific management and administrative roles which place them under a structure undermining their focus and productivity.
- Heavy governmental presence leads to bureaucracy, strong dependence on domestic economic and political issues, public policies rigidity, an incipient international network, low competitiveness and low research management and administration efficiency (Oliveira & Bonacelli, 2019).

All the above are factors which only increase the main problem worldwide: the gap between academia and industry related to international collaboration, in turn means a decrease in investment in more specific research sectors as research and experimental development (R&D). In 2019 in the U.S. for example, the expected expenses in R&D totaled $656 billion. Of this total, 71% ($463 billion) was funded by the business sector, 21% by the government and only 3%, by higher education institutions. On the other hand, regarding use of this investment, the private sector used 74% of this investment, while the government and higher education institutions were responsible for the use of 9% and 11% respectively (Borough, 2021). Meanwhile, in Brazil, the focus is still on the government's investment cuts instead of on strengthening and facilitating the avenues for collaboration, in turn means a decrease in investment in more specific research sectors as research and experimental development (R&D). In 2019 from the 2019–20 edition of national patterns of R&D Resources. NSF Retrieved January 25, 2022, from https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf22314

NCSES, 2021). Meanwhile, in Brazil, the focus is still on the government’s investment cuts instead of on strengthening and facilitating the avenues for collaboration with the private sector (Ricoardo, 2021). Some initiatives have been launched, such as the FUTURE-SE federal program for Brazilian private sector, but there is still has a long way to go (Grisa, 2019).

Successful scientific collaboration and relevant investment can be a game changer for both academia and industry. But collaboration is built upon trust, on top of common and individual interests and needs. For such to happen, there is heavy administrative work behind it. It is necessary to know how the other part functions, their businesses, who the players are, the conditions they bring to the collaboration, their umbrella legislation and compliance, and to learn more about the impact of a successful project result. Academic researchers are over-worked and on the other hand, science professionals in the industry have to cope with the daily demands of the business itself.

Research administrators can turn the game around for the Brazilian scientific research scenario. The establishment of research administration as a profession, with English speaking, well-educated and trained professionals, will help expand the scientific/industry partnership. Research Administrators, with their expertise in the management and administration of several activities in the sponsored research life cycle, are able to create the structure with which the researcher needs to work according to more modern international practices and be more creative, innovative, and efficient in his or her research.

Research administrators can create the transparency needed for Brazilian researchers to engage in science with a competitive approach, by viewing industry's profit goal as a positive asset, instead of as a villain, trying to “steal” the science. They can identify grant opportunities outside of the governmental umbrella, which historically roots the entire research project to a scientific horizon and timing which are usually not aligned with the international and industry demands. Research administrators can help make academic research become more visible, attracting partners of international caliber, and give international and industry players the compliance, legal, administrative high-quality services they are used to. All this, with an additional priceless benefit—more resources and knowledge exchange for the improvement of Brazil’s STEM higher education.

Research Administrators are the efficacy Brazilian research needs.

"Research administrators can turn the game around for the Brazilian scientific research scenario." REFERENCES


Gloria Santos, Brazilian, MSc Chem, currently enrolled in the International Research Administration Management program at Johns Hopkins, is in a career transition to research administration. Her passion for the career started after volunteering at a US nonprofit, with institutions and researchers from Africa. She wants to use her scientific expertise, and background in compliance and auditing to work in the profession. Gloria can be reached at g santos6@jhu.edu.

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On behalf of the Federal Demonstration Partnership, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and celebrate the dedication and contributions to the organization of David Wright, our Executive Director for the past fifteen years. Those of us who have had the privilege of working with him know what a remarkable leader he has been in nurturing the growth of the organization, including the tremendous gains in scope and impact across the multiple phases for which he has provided guidance.

Prior to his leadership of the FDP, David had a long career focused on building and supporting Electronic Research Administration (ERA) systems in both university and federal settings. He began his work in university research administration as the Manager of Technology Services for the Office of Sponsored Programs at Emory University and subsequently as the Director of Research Information Systems at the University of Texas Medical Branch. He also has extensive experience working within the federal government, first at the NIH on the eRA project as a Policy Analyst and Extramural Community Liaison and later as the project manager for the eRA Commons and Chief of the Requirements Analysis Branch of the eRA project. David has also served in many capacities with various national research administration organizations, including the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) and the Society for Research Administrators (SRA). In addition to giving ERA related presentations throughout his career, David was the co-chair of a special conference devoted to Electronic Research Administration by NCURA. He was also part of the eRA Commons Working group, an advisory group to the NIH concerning the eRA Commons, before his move to the Washington, D.C. area.

Given David’s deep involvement with the FDP for such a long period, we thought that it would be fitting and important to ask him to reflect briefly on the organization’s accomplishments and evolution, what he considers the most rewarding parts of his work over the last 15 years, and for some suggestions to help guide us as we move into the future.

What do you feel have been some of the most noteworthy accomplishments of the FDP over the last 15 years?

There have been many great accomplishments over the past 15 years. I think that the Faculty Workload Survey has to be at the top of the list. That project has had such a significant impact and has been cited by many organizations to demonstrate the administrative burden that exists in the research community and help identify areas to reduce burden. Another project that I believe raised the awareness and credibility of the FDP was the survey and subsequent report on the added burdens introduced by the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We were...
able to use that survey to break down the many person-hours necessary to meet the requirements of the Act and put a put a price tag on them. The Expanded Clearinghouse is also a notable project. It is a great time saver for those organizations that use it to assist with subrecipient monitoring, and it is notable that it is also available to organizations that are not part of the FDP. This will be used as a model for future projects coming out of the FDP and will be able to expand our impact beyond our membership. Another project that currently reaches beyond the FDP is our subaward templates and guidance documents. We have been able to help so many organizations with those resources that I would have to say that it has been among the most effective of all our projects.

With all of the great things that the FDP has been able to do, there has also been a rise in recognition and stature of the FDP as an organization. To gain that respect from others for the work of the organization is in and of itself another great accomplishment.

“I remember watching multiple FDP members testify in front of Congress and thinking that we must be on to something if Congress wants to know what we have to say.”

How has the FDP evolved since you started 15 years ago as Executive Director?
The obvious thing is the growth of the organization. When I started, we had a little over 100 organizations as members, now we are at 217. In the beginning, it was all about working on projects to reduce burden. The organization has since done some shifting to include information dissemination during our meetings related to research and research administration. Along with growing the organization, we have also been able to expand the areas in which we operated. I think one of the biggest examples of this was when we added the Research Compliance Committee at the start of Phase V. Likewise, we now have many more volunteers to take on work, and so we are able to work on more projects at the same time. There are so many talented people out there who are ready to volunteer in order to give back to their profession. The FDP needs to make sure that it stays in a position to harness that energy and expertise. The growth has also created a need to become more organized than we were in the past. The structure and daily operation of the organization are currently undergoing great change and will keep evolving for some time.

What have been the most rewarding experiences for you in leading the FDP?
There have been a lot of rewarding experiences for me in the past 15 years. Chief among them has been the great things that the FDP has been able to accomplish, such as getting so many organizations to use one standard subaward form. That may not seem like a big accomplishment to those outside of our profession, but it is huge. Along those lines, it has been greatly rewarding to see the recognition of the FDP from other organizations grow due to the great things that we have been able to do, especially for the Faculty Workload Survey. I remember watching multiple FDP members testify in front of Congress and thinking that we must be on to something if Congress wants to know what we have to say. I don’t know if a lot of people know this, but we had a delegation from Japan visit just to talk with the FDP about what we do and how we operate. The Japanese government was in the process of setting up an organization like the FDP and wanted to tap into our experience and expertise.

With all of that said, the most rewarding experience has been working with some of the most talented people in the country. In 15 years, there have been a lot of them. I’ve made some great friendships over the years and really value those relationships. It has been especially gratifying to get to know people outside of the research administration realm and finding out who they are as people.

Do you have any parting words of wisdom or advice to the next leader before you go (things you’ve learned, and some of the challenges you’ve faced)?
Be flexible! Directions change, hot topics cool off and new ones emerge, new tools become available. The next leader will need to adjust to rapidly changing conditions. This is on both the programmatic side of the organization dealing with policies and laws as well as on the operational side dealing with websites, project management tools, and the general day-to-day management.

Thank you David, for all you have done. We wish you the best as you move into your next career phase!

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Stephanie F. Scott, MS, CRA, is the Director of Policy and Research Development, Sponsored Projects Administration at Columbia University, responsible for education on policies and procedures impacting the day-to-day management of proposals and awards. She is active in the Federal Demonstration Partnership and served on NCURA’s Professional Development Committee. Stephanie can be reached at sf2110@columbia.edu.

Jennifer Taylor, PhD, MBA, is Vice President for Research at Tennessee Tech University. Jennifer serves on the Board of the FDP and is Co-Chair of the FDP Communications Committee. She has been a senior research administrator for more than 15 years and a member of NCURA during that time. She can be reached at jennifer.taylor@tntech.edu.
Abby Guillory is now the Director of Education and Training, Research Operations and Communications at North Carolina State University.

Vivian Holmes is now the Director of Research Administration Services at MIT.

Sue Kelch will be retiring after more than 36 years at the University of Michigan. She has enjoyed her career and has worked in a variety of departments including Aerospace and Electrical Engineering, School of Public Health, and Michigan Medicine. One of her proudest achievements has been to organize a CRA study group called aIM Higher, and in five years watched the number of CRAs at UM grow from a handful to 100. Look for her fiction novel about the life and times of a heroine research administrator; and know that the names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Alice Tangredi-Hannon, University Research Compliance Officer at Yale University, has recently retired after 15 years at Yale and 45 years in research administration. Alice has been a member of NCURA since 1981 and served as both Secretary and Treasurer of NCURA and is a recipient of NCURA’s Distinguished Service Award.

Do you have a milestone to share? Email schiffman@ncura.edu
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QUESTIONS? Contact Holly Anderson, Senior Manager, Meetings & Conferences at anderson@ncura.edu.
As I am writing this article, we are just two hours away from holding our very first new member orientation. With hindsight I can tell you that this was a huge success. These new member orientations are open to everyone and will give a basic introduction to the region’s leadership, events, and activities taking place in the region. There will also be time to ask questions and network with other members. The discussion that happened two hours from now was terrific and everyone learned a great deal.

We are also working on a brand-new website which if not live already, will be soon. Our Professional Development Committee is working hard to put together workshops and other training/networking activities both in person and virtual. If you are interested in hosting a workshop at your institution, please contact Chea Smith chea.smith@rutgers.edu.

Mark your calendars! Our Regional meeting will take place at the Hotel Dupont in Wilmington Delaware from November 6th-9th 2022. For more information or to volunteer in the planning of the Regional Meeting, please contact Sandy Collier at collier@umd.edu.

Our Volunteer Committee is dedicated to providing member engagement activities throughout the region. New ideas are always welcome and encouraged. We want all our members involved. If you are looking to get involved, have an idea, just want to say hello, please reach out to our Chair-Elect, Lamar Oglesby lo170@research.rutgers.edu or myself, and we can work with you to find a volunteer opportunity in our Region that matches your interests, talents and availability!

Continue to look for announcements on the web, Facebook, and in e-blasts as we continue through the year. To stay connected to the Region, be sure to join our Facebook page and the Region II community on NCURA Collaborate.

Sonya Stern is the Chair of Region I and serves as the Director, Anesthesiology and Emergency Medicine at the University of Vermont Medical Center. She can be reached at sonya.stern@uvmhealth.org.

Have a wonderful spring and stay safe!

Adam Greenberg is the Chair of Region II and serves as Director of Sponsored Programs at the CUNY Advanced Science Research Center. He can be reached at Adam.Greenberg@cuny.edu.
Happy New Year from Region III! We are hard at work finalizing preparations for our May 2022 Spring Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Our chair-elect, Natasha Williams (Emory), her co-chair, Carpentato “Tanta” Myles (University of Alabama), and our Program Committee are working with the Galt House Hotel to plan a flamingo-fabulous event that allows us to meet in person while keeping everyone’s health and safety in mind. More information about the meeting and related travel is available on the Region III website: http://ncuraregioniii.com/springmeeting. Thank you to the Program Committee for their hard work on the 2022 meeting!

Compliance: Michael Mitchell, Georgia Institute of Technology
Departmental: Lacey Rhea, Duke University
Federal: Greg Adams, Broward College
Federal On-Site: Kimberly Johns, Virginia Commonwealth University
Human Relations in Research Administration: Ashley Whitaker, Nova Southeastern University
Organizational Development: Abby Guillory, North Carolina State U
Post-Award: Laneika Musalini, Tri-County Technical College
Pre-Award: Tamaira Lyons, Emory University
Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUI): Stephanie Marinone, University of Georgia
Senior: John Teal, Georgia Institute of Technology
Workshops: Rashonda Harris, University of Connecticut
Presenter Liaison: Jacqueline Rearick, Liberty University

We still need volunteers for this year’s meeting as well. Remember, not everything is a big commitment of time and we need help with little things, too! If you are interested in volunteering, check out the opportunities on our website: http://ncuraregioniii.com/spring-meeting/volunteer-opportunities.

The keynote speaker for this year’s meeting will be Conor O’Driscoll, Master Distiller at Heaven Hill Distillery. We look forward to hearing his unique perspective on innovation in the workplace and the art and science of making bourbon. The meeting in Louisville will be our first in-person meeting since 2019 and we can’t wait to see you!

Scott Niles, PhD, is the Chair of Region III, and serves as Contracting Officer at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He can be reached at scott.niles@osp.gatech.edu.

Happy Spring, Region IV! We hope to see you in Minneapolis in May! There is still time to register for the Region IV Spring meeting, which will be held May 8 – May 11, 2022 at the Marriott City Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Visit www.ncuraregioniv.com for details.

The spring meeting is a great opportunity for professional development, networking, and fun! Meeting attendees will choose from a wide range of concurrent sessions during the two and a half days of regular conference on Monday through Wednesday, May 9 – May 11. There will be a wide variety of topics covered throughout the conference and optional special interest workshops will be held on Sunday, May 8th.

With the changing seasons, also comes the changing of Regional leadership. This will be my last article as Chair, and to say that it has been an honor to serve Region IV this past year is an understatement! I have held this honor near and dear to my heart and words are not enough to thank you for entrusting me with this position! Thank you to all who I have been able to work with during this time! We have the most amazing and talented volunteers, committee members and chairs, board members, and officers whose tireless efforts continue to make Region IV such a strong, vibrant, and supportive community.

Please extend a warm welcome to Kristin Harmon from University of Wisconsin-Madison who will become the new Region IV Chair after the regional meeting in May! As Chair-elect this past year, Kristin has been working really hard at planning an amazing regional meeting! It is hard to believe this will be our first regional meeting together since we were in Columbus, Ohio in 2019! Please register & mark your calendars for the Region IV Spring Meeting on May 8 – 11, 2022 in Minneapolis!

Election results for the upcoming Region IV board will be announced shortly, but that doesn’t mean it’s too early to start thinking about board positions next year. We will be seeking nominees for the Chair-elect position, two At-Large member positions and for a Representative to the NCURA Board of Directors. Job descriptions are posted on the Region IV website. You can always reach out to current or past board members for more information. There is also a great article, “Is running for an officer or board position right for you?” posted at www.ncuraregioniv.com/is-running-right-for-me.html.

Katie Schortgen, CRA, MA, is the Chair of Region IV and serves as the Manager/Director of Grants Accounting at Eastern Michigan University. She can be reached at khoops@emich.edu.
I am excited to say that we are off to a great start for 2022. The Executive Board is working hard to implement initiatives the officers established at the retreat in 2021, and have many working groups being formed at this time for those initiatives. We are wanting to get more members involved in our regional activities, so we ask that you take some time to review the volunteer opportunities listed below and think about how you can help us grow as a region. We have a diverse offering of ways to get involved and I hope you will find a way to become an active participant in our region.


It has been 5 years since the Region’s by-laws have been reviewed, so this committee is tasked with reviewing and making suggested changes for approval by the general membership. Publications/communication helps manage our social media, e-blast and general communications with our members. The membership and hospitality committee plans the netzone events at the national meeting, disseminates welcome information to our new members and hosts a new members’ reception at regional meetings. The volunteer database will help us to quickly identify members willing to assist with specific areas where we need support. Site selection committee helps the officers determine the location of the next meeting (all travel expenses for this are covered by the Region). If any of these committees interest you, please reach out to me.

The current site selection committee, chaired by Katie Plum and Becky Castillo are finalizing the location of 2022 meeting. Watch your e-blast for more information to come on the meeting, volunteer opportunities, and a call for proposals.

The 2022 Mustang Mentor Program kicked off in January. We are so excited to have another round of Mentees and Mentors working together to advance research administration in our region. For more information on this program, check out their website https://ncuraregionv.com/mustang-mentoring-program.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me at tgrimm@tamu.edu with questions, comments or suggestions related to our region. Please check out website for up-to-date information: https://ncuraregionv.com.

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

It is spring, and new growth and rebirth surround us. I hope that all regional members have entered the New Year with renewed energy and hope for success and health. What a wonderful time of year to consider new educational and volunteer offerings on the horizon. Certainly, many of you will be attending FRA/PRA in New Orleans is amazing and I hope you can take a moment to enjoy your surroundings as you breathe new educational life your careers. That said, the region is knee deep into planning for the Region VI/VII Conference in Tuscon, Arizona, Oct. 29 – Nov. 2 at the Marriott Starr-Pass Resort. I hope your volunteer spirit is alive and well as a call will be coming out very soon for volunteers and presenters! We hope to offer several workshops as well as a cadre of concurrent sessions at all levels. Additionally, we are working on a “virtual” day offering a small portion of educational offerings, geared toward beginners in research administration.

This means that we will need a lot of help. I really want to encourage you to dip your finger in the volunteer pool, the experience will surprise you and, if you are anything like me, encourage your continued involvement. Remember, “you get out what you put in,” so I know that we can look forward to an amazing experience.

The timing of the conference couldn’t be any better coinciding with Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebrations throughout the area. We will be providing an ethnically rich experience, celebrating local customs, cuisines and talents. We hope that we not only provide you a rich educational experience, but an opportunity to experience the area culture in both broad and intimate ways. We are super excited by this first “in-person” conference opportunity for the region in 2 years and hope to see all of you there. Check the resort out at www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/tussp-jw-marriott-tuscon-starr-pass-report-and-spa.

Interested in volunteering in the region, please reach out to our volunteer committee lead, Mich Pane, michiko@stanford.edu, or respond directly to our calls for volunteers.

Theresa Caban, MPA, CRA, is the Region VI Chair and serves as Director of Clinical Trials at The Lundquist Institute. She can be reached at theresa.caban@lundquist.org.
Hello fellow Jackalopes!

I hope that your 2022 is looking great both professionally and personally! Even though I have been Chair for only a short time, I have appreciated connecting with the research administrators across our region and it has been an important reminder of the integral work we all do and how great it is to get to know others in our profession. We will have a lot of opportunities in 2022 to connect!

One way to connect is with the Region VII Professional Education Development Committee (PEDC). The purpose of the PEDC is to support professional development activities for regional members and provide a broad range of educational services to ensure that all regional members have access to professional development programs.

If you have ideas for educational content in 2022, or are interested in joining this important committee, please contact Kathryn O’Hayre, Kathryn.OHayre@colostate.edu. For updates on PEDC activities and access to resources, visit the PEDC website - www.ncuraregionvii.org/pedc. We look forward to seeing you throughout the year!

Regional Meeting (RM2022): This will be IN-PERSON, partnering with Region VI, and will be held in Tucson, AZ (October 30- November 2). The theme of the meeting will be “Reconnect and Rejuvenate”. It has been three years since we have met in-person and I hope you are able to join us to Reconnect. The location is a wonderful resort with great views that will help you Rejuvenate (J.W. Marriott Starr Pass Resort). Session proposals will be accepted through March 14 (www.ncuraregionvii.org/regional-meeting).

Elections 2022: Being on the Leadership Team is a great way to shape the direction of the Region! Open positions this year will be: Chair-Elect, Treasurer-Elect, Member at Large, and Regionally Elected Member of the Board. More information to come, but please reach out if you are interested in learning more about elected positions.

Be on the lookout for our next Region VII newsletter. If you have a topic or item for newsletter spotlight, contact Trisha Southergill, Trisha.Southergill@colostate.edu.

Want to volunteer? Contact Volunteer Coordinator Alexa Van Dalem, alexa.vandalem@colorado.edu. Alexa will be able to advise on the various opportunities available.

Natalie Buys is the Chair of Region VII and serves as the Finance and Research Program Director for the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She can be reached at Natalie.Buys@cuanschutz.edu.

This is my first article as Secretary for Region VIII, and I’m honoured to have joined the Executive and to give back to NCURA as much as it has given to me. At our first Executive and Advisory meetings of the year, I was excited to be joining my colleagues from across the globe and to see the amazing energy everyone brought. While we may span four continents (Europe, Australia, Africa, and North America) and some were just winding down as some were getting a very early start to the day, this had no effect on the amount of creative brainstorming that came through in those meetings to better understand how to stay connected with all of you during this ongoing pandemic.

Our mission for this year continues to include how to stay connected, and to support and learn from each other. No matter how far we span, I know that, while we may have lost touch as this pandemic has evolved, we all have so much to learn from each other – and it’s time to reconnect and re-engage! Stay tuned for more opportunities to connect with your colleagues across the globe.

While some of you may be starting to see restrictions lift, others (like some of us in Canada) are beginning to see things tighten back up as we enter the 24th month of the pandemic. I am hopeful that many of us will be back together again in Washington D.C. in August for the Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to come together in person and to connect with each other, share knowledge, and build everlasting relationships. Whether this is possible for us this year or not, we will continue to focus on that mission of keeping Region VIII together.

While we’ve put our heads together to figure out how to stay connected, we’d love to hear from you as to how we can best support you. Please reach out via email or get in touch with us through our newly established international regional LinkedIn group.

For now, please continue to stay healthy and stay safe - hope to see you all in August.

All my best from Canada!

Grace Kelly is the Secretary of Region VIII and serves as Manager, Research Compliance Programs & Education at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada. She can be reached at Grace.Kelly@uwo.ca.
Houston is known for being an oil town. But 50 years from now, will it still center on the petrochemical industry? Architecture professors Matt Johnson and Michael Kubo have set out to explore questions such as “what does it mean to design and build in the wake of an energy transition?” and “how do we rethink communities and landscapes that have been altered by industry?”

Their proposal, “Gulf: Architecture, Ecology, and Precarity on the Gulf Coast,” was awarded the Course Development Prize in Architecture, Climate Change, and Society by the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University, in conjunction with the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA). The 2020 competition enabled them to begin working on an innovative curriculum for the University of Houston’s Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture – at the intersection of history, architecture, and environmental design.

“Collaborative and interdisciplinary, the studio and seminar class the architects aim to teach will focus on the Gulf Coast and Houston’s Ship Channel, called by some “The Chemical Coast.” The oil and gas industry is a part of what some scholars have called petroculture, a term that refers to the cultural impacts of a century and a half of petroleum production and use. As our culture starts to transition toward integrating energy sources beyond fossil fuels, the way we plan our cities and communities is going to change. Could urbanization re-appropriate formerly industrial areas for urban growth, or might new developments reclaim wild spaces? What are the historical impacts of environmental racism in communities along the Gulf? These are the types of questions they hope will not only spark creativity in their students, but also translate to real-world solutions for the zoning-deprived, sprawling city of Houston.

“Racially segregated ‘fenceline’ communities often sit in uneasy proximity to petrochemical plants. They can be subject to the environmental impacts of polluted soil, air, groundwater and aquifers,” said Johnson. “Chemicals and pollutants in these areas are at risk for leaks or spills, particularly during extreme weather events made worse by climate change,” continued Kubo.

One important aspect of the professors’ work involves the past—and that is where historian Kubo shines. “What did the landscape look like prior to urbanization?” he asks. This leads the curriculum down many paths, one of which is coastal prairie re-wilding—or, from an ecological standpoint, remediating the soil and recovering tidal flows.

“I think that architects should engage directly with urgent issues—climate change, borders, precarity, inequity, migration—but always with humility,” stated Johnson. “Architecture can certainly lend a hand, but trying to solve these problems entirely [through architecture] is a little bit out of step, I think. So we want to address issues of climate change and development on the Gulf Coast, but collaboration is our primary mode for examining these things. We’re interested in how communities can work together to plan for a healthier urban future.”
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NCURA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

IN-PERSON TRAVELING WORKSHOPS

• Financial Research Administration Workshop
  May 16-18, 2022
  Las Vegas, NV

• Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
  May 16-18, 2022
  Las Vegas, NV

LIVE VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

• Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
  June 13-16, 2022
  1:00-5:00 pm ET

• Level II: Sponsored Projects Administration Workshop
  April 25-28, 2022
  1:00-5:00 pm ET

NATIONAL CONFERENCES

• Annual Meeting
  August 7-10, 2022
  Washington, DC

ON-DEMAND WEBINARS

• Developing Compelling Budget Justifications
• Guidance on the Preparation of NIH RPPRs with COVID-19 Impacts and Other Support
• In-N-Out: Here’s What PI Transfers Are All About
• Participant Support Costs: An Overview of Dos and Don’ts
• Work Smarter, Not Harder: The Tools, Methods and Technology to Increase Productivity

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)
  May 1-4, 2022
  Newport, RI

• Region II (Mid-Atlantic)
  May 1-4, 2022
  Wilmington, DE

• Region III (Southeastern)
  May 8-11, 2022
  Louisville, KY

• Region IV (Mid-America)
  Minneapolis, MN

• Region VI (Western)/Region VII (Rocky Mountain)
  Oct 30-Nov 2, 2022
  Tucson, AZ

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