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ON THE COVER: What great magazine themes we have had for 2015! Transactions; Cultivating Community; New Guidance, Renewed Partnerships; Diving into Data; The Politics of Research Administration; and finally Diversity of Research Administration. All I can say is WOW! In this issue diversity takes a broad stroke because research administration includes and extends beyond the racial, gender, and ethnic diversity of research administrators. We are united as research administrators but we also work at diverse types of institutions, with diverse sponsors, within diverse working environments and even positions. In today’s tight funding climate, we must also seek to diversify our portfolios. This issue will highlight the wide range of people, research, institutions, sponsors, positions and approaches in research administration and ways to leverage our diversity into more positive outcomes.

Diversity articles are spread throughout this issue. Featuring “Spotlight on Promoting Diversity in Research Administration: Pay Attention to the Lessons Your Colleagues Bring to the Table” and “Research Administration – The Starting Point for Integrating Diversity”, this issue reflects great input regarding diversity from our own, to our own.

“Ask the Leadership Coach” is a great column by one of our beloved NCURA friends Garry Sanders. Garry is an executive coach and graduate of Georgetown University’s Certificate Program in Leadership Coaching, and is a long-time research administrator and recipient of NCURA’s Distinguished Service Award. Also, thanks to Jeanne M. Viviani for helping us work smart with your ideas on how to manage our email – Oh My…so smart!!

Much appreciation to Charlene Blevens for authoring the Audit Watch for the Magazine – what will we all do now that she has retired? An opportunity awaits an NCURA member to pick up where Charlene left off, to keep sharing with us recent audit issues, is that person you?? Our global editors came through with articles from Japan and Europe – “Beginning of the Japanese University Research Administrators’ Network” by Tadashi Sugihara at the Kyoto University Research Administration Office and “RA in Europe - Riddle Me This” by Laura Plant Fuentes at the Karolinska Institutet’s Grants Office are both good pieces.

What a fun day the first ever Research Administrator Day was, which took place on September 25th – this issue has a collage of how many of you celebrated! Much appreciation to Charlene Blevens for authoring the Audit Watch for the Magazine – what will we all do now that she has retired? An opportunity awaits an NCURA member to pick up where Charlene left off, to keep sharing with us recent audit issues, is that person you?? Our global editors came through with articles from Japan and Europe – “Beginning of the Japanese University Research Administrators’ Network” by Tadashi Sugihara at the Kyoto University Research Administration Office and “RA in Europe - Riddle Me This” by Laura Plant Fuentes at the Karolinska Institutet’s Grants Office are both good pieces.

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I don’t know about you all, but that David Smelser makes us laugh every issue with his groups research administration memes. Even in this issue we tease Pat Green, but David still makes a great point about us research administrators… and by the way the new Sr. Editor of the Magazine is none-other-than Pat Hawk from Oregon State University, ever pushing the envelope for new ideas, change, and great memories! Good luck Pat, you’ll have this job “down pat” before you know it.

Lastly, a special shout out to my Magazine compatriots (the Co-Editors), Toni Shaklee, Kris Monahan, and David Smelser, a great time we have had this year. Also, my partners on the operation side of things Derek Brown, Marc Schiffman, and Geeta Dutta – oh the issues we’ve made during our run – thanks so much. I have loved working with all of you supporting research…together.

Dan Nordquist, Senior Editor

Dan Nordquist is currently the Associate Vice President, Office of Research Operations and Support. He oversees proposal and award processing, research metrics, non-financial post-award, and is significantly involved in the implementation of WSU’s research strategic initiatives. He has a passion for technology and its positive impact on research management. Dan has significant leadership experience internally and externally, and is an NCURA Past President and helps with NCURA’s e-Xtra weekly news information source. He can be reached at nordquist@wsu.edu

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Message from Your President

By Michelle Vazin, NCURA President

I can’t believe we are almost at the end of the calendar year. When I look back on 2015, I am amazed and proud of all the things that NCURA accomplished this year. It has truly been a very busy year. NCURA is thriving and so is our profession. Research Administration is trending these days and NCURA is definitely playing an active part in that phenomena. How exciting it was to celebrate the inaugural Research Administrator Day around the world on September 25, 2015. It was a wonderful experience and the day was embraced by colleagues and institutions everywhere. Check out a few of the picture highlights in this issue! I don’t think it gets more diverse than this, so how appropriate it is that the theme for the last issue of the magazine for 2015 is Diversity of Research Administration. Research Administration truly thrives at all types and sizes of institutions, in countries around the globe, with administrators of diverse backgrounds and it supports scientist that are collaborating across disciplines every day. Diversity is a critical component of research and research administration so I think you will find this issue on point and relevant.

I would like to share with you some of the exciting initiatives and accomplishments that the Board of Directors was engaged in and achieved this year. We had a very successful meeting this fall in Nashville, TN. The Board worked hard this year to review the previous strategic plan that got us to 2015 and then develop and design the new strategic plan to take NCURA to 2025. Our organization has a strong track record of pushing the limits and being proactive to ensure that we offer the best opportunities and experiences to our membership when it comes to educational and professional development within research administration. In addition, we continue to challenge ourselves and broaden our platform to further refine and promote the profession of research administration as a whole. So it is no surprise that the goals established by the Board for the next 10 years are ambitious and that the strategies that will be deployed to achieve these goals will be on the cutting edge.

The Board crafted and approved a Code of Conduct for our leadership this year. Here again, NCURA demonstrates why we are a leader in our community by purposively taking proactive measures to set the right tone for our association. The Board also approved the 2016 budget which continues to reflect a very sound financial position for NCURA over the next year. On a global front, our initiatives outside of the US continued to prosper this year and benefit our membership greatly. As part of the BILAT USA 2.0 program, a second round of one-day workshops took place in Warsaw, Rome and Lisbon this fall which provided a good foundation of understanding on NIH and NSF processes for our global partners. In addition, NCURA is also collaborating with a sister association, European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA), to co-produce a couple of one-day workshops in 2016 which will benefit members in both associations as global partnerships continue to grow. Finally, another important item that was approved at the fall Board meeting was the appointment of the next Senior Editor of NCURA Magazine. I am very pleased to announce that Pat Hawk, from Oregon State University and a past president of NCURA, will be the next Senior Editor. This is a three year assignment and I look forward to watching the magazine thrive under her leadership and building on the tremendous strides of outgoing Senior Editor Dan Nordquist.

As the clock winds down on my year as President and I reflect on 2015, I am extremely thankful to have had this opportunity to serve NCURA and the membership and I would like to thank all of my friends, colleagues, my Vanderbilt family, and members I met along the way who have been so supportive. This association is truly special and I cannot imagine doing what I do on my own campus without such a strong community like NCURA at my back. I am honored that I had the privilege to serve in this capacity and have enjoyed, in some small way, making a difference in NCURA’s continued success now and into the future.

I am excited to hand off the baton to Robert Andresen, NCURA’s 2016 President. I know Bob will do a wonderful job next year and NCURA will benefit greatly from his leadership. As always, look to NCURA and its wonderful resources to facilitate and enhance your ability to make a difference as a research administrator. Good luck in 2016 and remember that through NCURA, we all benefit because we are “supporting research…together.”

Michelle Vazin is NCURA President and serves as the Director of Contract and Grant Accounting at Vanderbilt University.
She can be reached at michelle.vazin@vanderbilt.edu
Many of you may find yourselves spending more time than you ever anticipated reading (and re-reading!) the provisions of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, (hereinafter referred to as 2 CFR 200) and can likely recite certain provisions verbatim. While §2 CFR 200.107 provides that any exceptions to the requirements of 2 CFR 200 must be approved by OMB, agencies apparently can argue that they are in fact not making an exception, but an interpretation. The growing trend of deviations against the provisions in 2 CFR 200 absent OMB approval appear to be significant, forcing this continuous exercise. Funding Opportunities, Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs), agency policies, agency email correspondence and, in areas of Facilities and Administrative Cost caps, Cost Sharing/Leveraging, and Conflicts of Interest (to name a few) suggests what those of us fought hard to change, remains much the same ole, same ole, little changes due to workarounds created by varied interpretations. To complicate matters a bit further, as of the writing of this article, the Research Terms and Conditions (RT&C’s) of most agencies have not been made public, adding to concerns that the process may be no different than what we’re experiencing with 2 CFR 200. In a September 2015 letter to OMB, COGR detailed the most significant agency deviations, and we’re hopeful we’ll be heard and gain some traction. So stay tuned!

To be fair, combining eight federal circulars into one Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) was no cakewalk for OMB/COFAR. However, somewhere the term “Uniform” has taken on a different meaning in terms of following the Administration’s Executive Order 13563, Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review. Proof of this has been demonstrated by the various examples collected over the past several months, in part by a convergence of FAR like content in 2 CFR 200 in areas of Procurement (2 CFR 200.318), Conflict of Interest (2 CFR 200.112), and Subrecipient Monitoring (2 CFR 200.330). With the new guidance focus on performance (performance of reasonable efforts for research that can’t be priced like widgets) along with a prime recipient’s responsibility to determine subrecipient vs. contractor relationships, it can leave me at least wondering if I’m really missing something, or if this whole move is worse now than it was pre 2 CFR 200.

For example, over the course of many months, questions have risen related to for-profit entities. If a for-profit entity can’t collect profit under financial assistance awards, would there ever be any reason to issue a subgrant or sub-cooperative agreement? How is reasonable, allocable, and allowable determined when for-profit rate information is generally considered proprietary? Do federal agencies expect universities to employ the same methodologies and tools they do when contracting under the FAR to determine “reasonable” (e.g. weighted guidelines) profit/fee? Is it expected that universities have a trained specialist to determine what types of contracts to utilize (e.g., Time and Materials, Cost plus Fixed Fee) as do the federal agencies who send their employees to extensive week long classes for this? What type of agreement is used when for-profit...
entity is conducting research and development under prime recipient’s cooperative agreement? Does FAR only apply, or are we looking at a 2 CFR 200/FAR combo? 2 CFR 200 only? In the course of my regular discussions with various agency representatives, I’ve been told to “use university policies” for determining reasonableness…” but against what standards and whose? Will this satisfy internal and external auditors or the Office of Inspector Generals? Or will more findings be made, spending thousands of dollars and effort, not to mention reputational risks to reach the same conclusion as we’ve seen before. The regulations aren’t clear, and more often than not, it’s the universities who are footing the bills.

In closing, there have been signs of progress in the Federal Government’s understanding that more work is needed in the areas of streamlining and reducing costs and burden. OMB’s decision to extend procurement implementation for an additional year will allow agencies and institutions to develop suitable practices and processes to meet the regulatory standards. The new National Dialogue: Improving Federal Procurement and Grant Processes, an initiative of the Chief Acquisition Officers Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the General Services Administration affords the general public the ability to participate in ideas to modernize a 21st century government. The initiative focuses on reducing burden in the area of compliance requirements reporting, and solicits feedback on procurement processes, practices and reports for contracts as well as grants practices and processes. The National Academy of Sciences Committee on Federal Research Regulations and Reporting Requirements released Part 1 of a two-part report, Optimizing The Nation’s Investment in Academic Research: A New Regulatory Framework for the 21st Century. The report outlines a number of areas where Congress and federal agencies can reduce the administrative workload associated with federal research funding.

While these are three important steps in the right direction, it will take infrastructure, resources, agreement, and a whole lot of time before these ideas turns to reality. In other words, institutions and federal agencies must all own this problem together, while being mindful of set-backs and unexpected road-closures. If this were such an easy problem to solve, it would most certainly be solved by now.

One thing is for certain: continuing to work with our federal partners towards a little less ‘diversity’ and a little more ‘uniformity’ among the agencies for regulation interpretation will take time. In the meantime, recent evidence seems to suggest that devising plans and templates promoting a tactical and consistent approach may land you a quicker response. The response may not always be what you want to hear but it documents a problem worthy of attention, and as with anything, change happens in numbers. 

Jackie Bendall is the Director of Research Compliance and Administration for the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR). She comes to COGR with over 22 years of research administration experience in both public and private academic settings. She works with the COGR membership on a variety of research compliance matters in areas such as human subjects and animal research, data management and access, misconduct in research, select agent regulations, etc. She can be reached at jbendall@cogr.edu

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Cindy Hope, The University of Alabama
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Kris Monahan, Providence College
My perspective on the university research enterprise has changed over the years as I have changed jobs within the academy. From the time I was an idealistic assistant professor to a newly minted university president, there has been one thing that has remained clear—the most successful research does not take place in a vacuum. It is dependent on the integration of a number of diverse components working in cooperative relationship.

When I was a professor, the quality and quantity of my research was dependent on the coordinated efforts of my research assistants. When I was vice president of research and sponsored programs, I was focused on creating a one-stop-shop that integrated pre-award and post award services. My focus shifted to the integration of faculty research productivity, optimal student learning, and financially sustainable academic programs when I held the position of provost and vice president for academic affairs. On July 1 of this year, I became a university president and my perspective shifted yet again. For the long-term strategic positioning of the research enterprise, we must begin to think of research as part of our institutions’ ecosystem.

An ecosystem is characterized by the interrelationship of its diverse components. A lack of diversity among components and/or a lack of inter-relationship can negatively impact some or all components of the system. If we think of research as part of the university ecosystem, we can expand the number of potential research topics and partners and become a little less vulnerable when budgets are tight.

If your campus is like most colleges and universities in the country, it is faced with a number of grand challenges that threaten the university’s ecosystem. What are the issues on your campus that can weaken the university’s ecosystem? What role does your research enterprise play in supporting the university’s ecosystem?

A few of the grand challenges in higher education are listed below.

- College readiness, student retention, and graduation rates
- Increase in student mobility and issues related to transfer students
- Demographic decrease in traditional college-age students
- Student loan debt and default rates
- Unsustainable business model
- Campus sexual assault and other crimes

Why should research administrators care about these issues? If you think these are exclusively the concerns of the president and the provost, not only are you overlooking rich research topics, you are not fully contributing to the health of your institution’s ecosystem. No matter how many external dollars we attract, it is not prudent to remain in the silo of research while other campus functions struggle. If a university fails to attract, retain, and graduate a sufficient number of students, even the most research extensive campus can fall on hard economic times. We must address the grand challenges of our campuses with the same commitment we show when addressing scientific challenges such as renewable energy, water quality, and human health.

When your colleagues in academic affairs struggle with shrinking student enrollments, retention problems, and financially unsustainable academic programs, it is tempting to look away and focus only on day-to-day pre-award and post award activities. Although these are your primary concerns, they should not be your only concerns. Below are a few suggestions for shifting your perspective from enterprise to ecosystem.

- Become knowledgeable about your campus’s grand challenges and participate in campus-wide discussions of the threats to your institution’s ecosystem.
- Communicate to your president, and other cabinet members, how the research administration function contributes to the overall health of the institution beyond the traditional contribution it makes to the research enterprise.
- Include some or all of your university’s grand challenges in the strategic research plan for your campus.
- Request internal seed funds for research projects that address your university’s grand challenges.
- Encourage faculty to diversify their research interests beyond their discipline to include the grand challenges of your university.
- Compose a one or two page summary on your university’s grand challenges. Describe how the research enterprise addresses these challenges and supports the institution’s ecosystem. When appropriate, include the key points of the summary in proposals submitted for external funding.

Maria Thompson, Ph.D., president, Coppin State University, is a graduate of NCURA’s Leadership Development Institute. Before being appointed president, she served as provost and vice president for academic affairs at SUNY Oneonta and vice president for research and sponsored programs at Tennessee State University. She can be reached at mthompson@coppin.edu
Diversity in Research Administration is something to be promoted and applauded, as demonstrated in sponsor systems, federal and state laws, regulations, guidelines, FAQs, award mechanisms, university systems, policies, procedures, practices, roles, responsibilities, opinions, and interpretations. But when the transactionalization of such diversity originates from an incessant stream of emails arriving in one's inbox at the speed of sound, perhaps – like fresh, homemade raised donuts right out of the deep fryer – one can get too much of a good thing.

Consider sponsor systems. There is Grants.gov, SAM, FAPIIS, FastLane, eRA Commons, NSPIRES, eBRAP, iEdison, proposalCENTRAL, Grants@Heart, HRSA Electronic Handbook… the list goes on. Sometimes I feel like I’m trapped in a never-ending film loop with HAL 9000 from 2001: A Space Odyssey. The computers have taken over, and I am at their mercy:

eBRAP: “I’m sorry, Ty. I’m afraid I can’t do that.”
Me: “What’s the problem?”
eBRAP: “I think you know what the problem is just as well as I do, Ty.”
Me (thinking): But I don’t know. I don’t know!

Breathe. Happy place, happy place, happy place….

Multiply that scenario by hundreds of federal and state agencies and thousands of proposals a year, and there are times I’m ready to go to a happy place off the grid: A deserted island where palm fronds gently sway in the soft island breezes and the web is locally-spun by a harmless resident tarantula named Nancy. Or a cabin high in the mountains of the inland northwest where internet refers to the living of a man’s swimsuit.

Recognizing that I’m not going anywhere, let alone to either an island or mountain cabin, and, in fact, that I truly love my job, there are brief moments when I fantasize about a place where proposals are written on cuneiform tablets and “submitted” with a traditional spiral pass through an open window by PI’s wearing Harry Potter glasses and racing away in high top converse sneakers holding “Ollie ollie in come free!” But, once again, I digress.

Let’s turn to a different sort of diversity. There was a time where there were only two kinds of research administrators (RAs), pre-awarders and post-awarders. Later came the departmental research administrators and ERA experts. Today, a typical NCURA meeting is also populated by RAs whose responsibilities are solely limited to IRB, IACUC, IBC, export controls, IP, COI, and so on. This specialization is exciting and the more the merrier, I say, particularly when I consider what a fun-loving bunch we are and we don’t need lampshades to prove it.

Merry aside, it’s keeping up with this diversity that is the challenge. Why, at the last annual meeting I met a Director of Effort Reporting on Alternating Tuesdays for Left-Handed Faculty of Scandinavian Descent. I was surprised to learn that his position was created out of institutional concern for running afoul of 2 CFR 3800, “Effort Reporting on Alternating Tuesdays for Left-Handed Faculty of Scandinavian Descent.” Clearly, Inspector Generals (IGs) have joined the ranks of RAs as they, too, must be busier than mustard trying to ketchup.

The Federal government has also experienced growth and specialization. Here’s a fun fact: In 1811, the War Department (i.e., DOD) consisted of Secretary William Eustis and 11 clerks. That’s right, eleven. This compares to a civilian force of thousands today. As for the rest of the Federal government, consider the 626 page (!) U.S. Government Manual that provides a couple of paragraphs each on the agencies of the legislative, judicial, and executive branches. There are roughly 180 executive branch departments, independent agencies, and government corporations that merit mention in the Manual. To top it off, there are hundreds of agency sub-components with whom RAs also do business. As merry and fun-loving as we are, it’s mind numbing to think about just how much one needs to know to navigate the bureaucratic quagmire that is Federal grants management.

If variety is the spice of life, breaded ghost peppers dipped in spicy chipotle mustard sauce must be a favorite appetizer for RAs around the globe.

Walking this thoroughfare of diversity alone. Our Federal partners join us, and often light the brambled path. They “feel our pain,” as Bill Clinton used to say, and strive to smooth away obstacles. Improving the RPPR? Check. Engaging in a National Dialogue to improve grant and contract processes? Check. Making NIH applications easier? Check. Figuring out ways to reduce administrative burden? Check.

Before I sign off, though, it’s important to recognize that we are not walking this thoroughfare of diversity alone. Our Federal partners join us, and often light the brambled path. They “feel our pain,” as Bill Clinton used to say, and strive to smooth away obstacles. Improving the RPPR? Check. Engaging in a National Dialogue to improve grant and contract processes? Check. Making NIH applications easier? Check. Figuring out ways to reduce administrative burden? Check. Creating the Uniform Guidance so that we are all working under the same set of administrative principles? Check. The collegiality and collaboration we share with these partners reinforces the age-old adage: Today is a good day to be a research administrator!

NCURAbly Pedantic is written by long-standing NCURA members, all under pseudonym protection.
Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind when discussing "diversity" is that we are all innately the same. We’re all human, with the same needs, wants, and cares. Our sameness brings us together… and our diversity/differences enable us to expand the knowledge and viewpoint of the group. If we were all the same — we would have nothing to learn from each other; nor could we grow by sharing each other's experiences!

One of the more unique — and inspiring — stories in research administration I’ve come across is that of our Director, Kathy Marengo Hixenbaugh, CRA (Director, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Medicine Research Administration), and my two colleagues, Todd Langer, and Kevin Tucker. Both Kevin and Todd are deaf…”Profoundly so”, as they’d both described it. I’d also happened upon the information regarding Kathy’s degree in Deaf Education purely by chance one day, when the topic of where we’d all attended college happened to come up. Up until that point, I’d never really given much thought to the fact that we have two deaf colleagues working within our department — or to the fact that, previously, I had never actually worked with anyone that I could not readily communicate with.

Given my recently acquired knowledge of the facts above, and that this month’s theme is “Diversity of Research Administration”, I’d felt almost compelled to do a piece on Kathy, Todd, and Kevin, and how each of us can learn from them. Todd and Kevin have many perspectives that we can learn from — this article touches on only a few of the most notable. Kudos to Kathy for already understanding and utilizing these unique perspectives for the good of the group!

Kathy Marengo Hixenbaugh, CRA

Her college major. Kathy has a degree from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Deaf Education. When asked how she had chosen her major, she’d explained, “When I first went to IUP, I was in the business school. Shortly after taking a few classes, I’d realized that business did not interest me. I had made some new friends, and one of them was in the Deaf Education program, so I’d changed majors. Interestingly, I was one of the first nine students that graduated with a major in Deaf Education!”

Why research administration? Of course, I’d then asked the universal question — “Why Research Administration?” Kathy stated, “After I’d graduated from IUP, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do. My sister-in-law was working at CMU (1984) and got me a job as a secretary in the Department of Biology. Shortly after that, I accepted a job at CMU in the Department of Psychology and began working with an investigator on grants. This was the beginning of my career in Research Administration! Later, I’d accepted a job at Western Psychiatric and Clinic of UPMC (WPIC) with another investigator and then moved into WPIC’s central grants office.”

How did you recruit Todd and Kevin?

Kathy went on to reveal, “They’d both applied for positions for which I was recruiting and I’d hired them! I’d met and interviewed Kevin in 1994 — when I’d left WPIC, I hired him in Medicine (University of Pittsburgh).”

Kevin Tucker, Sponsored Projects Administrator (20 years)

When asked if he has any ability to hear at all Kevin replied, “I am profoundly deaf — I can hear with my hearing aid.”

Q: Why research administration?
A: “Research Administration is fun. I handle various tasks such as monthly level reconciliations, preparing monthly expense reports for Principal Investigators, and data entry.”

Q: What issue(s) do you wish more people in the workplace were aware of regarding deaf individuals, if anything?
A: “I wish the University of Pittsburgh would recruit more deaf people.”

Q: You’ve worked with Kathy in various departments. What is it that you value about her as an employer?
A: “Kathy is professional, well-mannered, and generous. I think her employees are satisfied with her and so am I.”

Q: Are there any special considerations in the workplace needed in order to accommodate deaf individuals?
A: “A sign language interpreter is needed in the workplace. Also — Sorenson Video Relay Service (Videophone).”

Q: How would an interested person learn sign language?
A: “Take a basic sign language course at Community College.”

Q: How long does it take to learn?
A: “It takes about one month.”

Q: Is it difficult?
A: “No.”

Q: You have the alphabet — but you don’t spell out every word. Does each word have its own sign?
A: “Yes, each word does have its own sign.”
**Todd Langer, Sponsored Projects Administrator (9 years)**

When asked if he has any ability to hear at all, Todd replied, “No – I’ve been profoundly deaf since birth. I did try to use a hearing aid, but it didn’t help me at all – I’d only heard noises.”

**Q: Why research administration?**

**A:** “I’d worked at Mellon Financial Corp for nine years and was laid off. I then decided to look for any job positions for which I was qualified and applied for various positions online – at which point Kathy contacted me. Right now, I am working as a Sponsored Projects Administrator, and have been for nine years!”

**Q: What issues do you wish more people in the workplace were aware of regarding employees with hearing impairments, if anything?**

**A:** “Hearing and deaf people are human beings. Deaf people can do anything except hear. Most hearing people think that deaf people can’t work and can’t do anything. We have to show that we CAN do anything. I would need an interpreter for meetings or workshops so I can understand what is being said. Also – I’d rather use the term ‘Deaf’, not hearing impairment, because people think my hearing isn’t working or broken.”

**Q: You’ve worked with Kathy for quite a while. What is it that you value about her as an employer?**

**A:** “I’m glad she hired me to work here. She always listens to my concerns. She always gets me an interpreter for all meetings and workshops. I have all accommodations that I need. I have videophone on my desk for me to be able to make any phone calls.”

**Q: How would an interested person learn sign language? How long does it take to learn? Is it difficult? You have the alphabet – but you don’t spell out every word. Does each word have its own sign? That seems like it would be difficult to learn…**

**A:** American Sign Language – it isn’t difficult to learn. You need to practice ASL every day and communicate and socialize with deaf people then you would be fluent. Sometimes, we do spell out the words. Most of the time, we sign many words with body language and facial expressions. Many people think it is very difficult to learn and practice ASL, but then they fall in love with ASL because of our beautiful language.”

**Q: What would be your advice be to other employers seeking out employees such as yourself?**

**A:** “You need to have open mind with minority people. You might overlook their knowledge and skills that can help you and your workplace.”

**Takeaway.** Adding different perspectives expands the knowledge base of any group. We also need to keep in mind that all people are universally the same and that we all have boundaries, feelings, and expectations. ASL is another perspective on life – another language – and being deaf is not a “disability” but rather a different way of viewing the world. We could be more helpful and understanding to colleagues by looking at differences as blessings… and ways to branch out with our friendships and knowledge bases. The world is open and beautiful – with so much to learn… why not explore new options by learning a different language and a new perspective on life! I’m up for it! Please check out the LifePrint.com website – this does make learning sound like tons of fun! There are many puzzles and games as well to solidify what you learn. 💡

**References**

On September 8, 2015, revisions were proposed to “modernize, strengthen, and make more effective the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.” If adopted, some of the proposed changes will significantly impact our business practices. Among the numerous revisions under consideration are: stricter new consent requirements, informed consent required for the research use of stored biospecimens (even if non-identified), and a mandate that U.S. institutions engaged in cooperative research rely on a single IRB. Many are wondering what these changes might mean for our researchers, our research participants, and our IRBs. While a number of professional societies are organizing to submit responses, anyone can comment on the proposed changes via web portal or snail mail until December 7. Be sure to identify the docket ID number HHS–OPHS–2015–0008.
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Building diversity in your expertise

A typical career path for a research administrator may start in a department at a research university, advance to a position in the centralized office working primarily on NIH proposal preparation and then transition to a privately funded laboratory managing the funding for clinical trials. This pathway starts with the development of a broad understanding of research administration then moves to developing a specialty with a deeper understanding of a specific facet of research administration and arrives at the establishment of bona fide expertise. The specialty does not blot out the prior experience - it builds upon it. These are steps to building your body of knowledge.

Our body of knowledge is the one thing that we take from one position to the next. Our professional reputation is directly related to our expertise so it makes developmental sense to intentionally build diverse areas of expertise into our professional narrative.

Take advantage of opportunities that cross your path to aide in building a diverse knowledge base. Volunteer for professional organizations, present at conferences and workshops, subscribe to professional publications, or volunteer to be a beta tester for new processes being developed by funding agencies.

Each of these suggestions allows you to experience a different facet of research administration. Through professional organizations such as NCURA you can participate in the policy-building that governs our industry. Presenting on your specialty at a conference gives you the opportunity to solidify your expertise and shows how knowledgeable you are on that topic. It also has the potential to pinpoint areas in which you could know more, where your knowledge is lacking. Working with funding agencies to test their processes gives you access to their motivations and an understanding of the why behind their sometimes cumbersome processes. All of these increase your understanding of research administration from a different perspective.

Another way to intentionally build diversity into your body of knowledge is to take a moment to reflect on your career and identify the transferable skills you've acquired during your professional life. Most likely you have transferable skills that have been with you a very long time that you may have discounted.

Everyone has work history that on the surface may not seem to be pertinent to their current positions. If we shift the paradigm a bit we see the connection between the experience gained at that summer job scooping ice cream that has provided you with the time management skills to prioritize urgent requests from several funding agencies, internal departments, and PIs. Perhaps an internship at a law firm while in college taught you how to write and format formal letters and memos making it easy for you to generate these kinds of communications today. Identifying your accumulated transferable skills deepens your body of knowledge and opens you up to utilizing hard won skills you may not know you have. This will diversify your perspective on how to solve problems and communicate with varied people.

Workplace Diversification

Workplace diversification is seated in a manager's ability to develop a team from different backgrounds, experiences, and skills. Providing increased benefits to the department. By understanding the benefits and dynamics of workplace diversity, a manager is able to construct a team with a competitive edge creating a diverse workforce that drives innovation by its very nature.

A work environment rich in diversity increases morale in employees and instills a desire to be more effective and efficient in their work. This results in an increase of creativity amongst the group as new ideas and solutions are brought to the collaborative effort. Morale is increased through diverse interactions between the different research
administrators which increases individual knowledge, and cultural exposure. Individuals are challenged to perform to the best of their ability, and increase their creativity by questioning the status quo through diverse collaboration.

A diverse work environment will attract desirable employees who appreciate an environment where they can grow personally and be challenged professionally. These employees are enticed by the morals of a company that obviously places credence in equality amongst its employees. Every potential employee desires to be treated with fairness and wants to know that their opinions have the same weight as their co-workers. A manager needs to consider what strengths and attributes a new team member can contribute to the growth of the team when questioning viable candidates. With careful cultivation and attention to detail, a manager can create a team that is diverse, dynamic, and engaged in the tasks at hand.

**Portfolio Diversification**
Managers who value productivity and effectiveness embrace labor diversification for their employees. This same practice is also best applied to portfolio management for research administrators. One could convincingly argue that through portfolio segregation, the opportunity for a research administrator to achieve the level of subject matter expert with that portfolio would be exponentially faster than compared to a research administer who has a diverse portfolio. This argument is narrow in focus and shortsighted for long term gain. While there is an inherent benefit to having subject matter experts in specific areas, it proves more effective to have subject matter experts in all areas of portfolio management.

Employees are challenged and encouraged to learn more in their roles, have greater job and personal satisfaction than those that are allowed to remain stagnant. Portfolio diversification provides an opportunity for research administrators to increase their own skill set and to share their knowledge base through training with other research administrators. An additional benefit to portfolio diversification is that with research administrators having increased knowledge and familiarity with different agencies there is the opportunity for administrators to act as backup for each other. This allows for continued productivity; meeting the needs for both agencies and departments in the absence of the assigned research administrator. Research administrators are able to support each other in times where one administrator’s work load increases more than another.

Through portfolio diversification amongst research administrators, managers foster an environment that is dedicated to learning rather than remaining stagnant, encouraging workplace communication rather than seclusion, boosting administrator morale rather than accepting the status quo, and propagating collaboration between departments. With portfolio diversification, research administrators, agencies and departments stand to gain more than they would lose.

**Diversity in the types of projects your institution pursues**
Each fully funded research project at any given institution is a victory and a success. It provides that institution with a purpose, recognizes the expertise of their researchers, and invites all involved into a national or sometimes global conversation about how this particular piece of science can move mankind forward in its quest for knowledge with the potential to benefit all of us.

There are a slew of professional organizations and listservs that can be utilized to keep abreast of trends in the field of research administration. Reading your sponsoring agencies updates and familiarizing yourself with their regulations and policies can give you a diverse perspective of what the research community is focusing on at any given time. Instantaneous access to all this information is certainly helpful but it takes action to transform it into a useful tool to germinate diverse projects within your institution.

The monetary benefit of a lush and vibrant research community is secondary to the potential impact some of our funded projects can have on mankind but many institutions value the money (almost) as much as the prestige of a successful project. For this reason competition for research money is fierce and as our research institutions experience budgetary cuts and drops in other forms of funding the competition for research dollars increase.

If you are a departmental research administrator communicate with your central office, let them know that your researchers are interested in collaborating on cross discipline opportunities with other researchers in your community. Research administrators who work in central offices see all the proposals that are submitted and funded. They may be able to help your researchers make connections with other researchers on campus that possess the expertise they need to develop a particular proposal.

Foment a collaborative environment for your PI’s. Work on ways to bring faculty together that may not cross paths in their day to day lives but whose areas of expertise may complement each other. Sponsor a faculty lounge with monthly brainstorming parties; ask successful senior PI’s to share their proposal writing experience with new faculty. PI’s are people who are passionate about their subject matter, get them in a room together and the creativity they bring to it will astound you.

Cross discipline collaborations bring different types of thinkers together diversifying the types of opportunities your institution can pursue. The resulting proposals have a depth of understanding that explores varied and complementary characteristics of the research subject. This can be intriguing to funding agencies and may give your institution an edge during review.

Research administrators have the opportunity and potential to be the driving force for diversity at an institution. An office of grants and contracts whose mission addresses creating a diverse workforce with individuals dedicated to increasing the diversity of their knowledge base functions collaboratively and innovatively. This establishes a firm foundation which can be used to support a climate that embraces diversity within all facets of research administration. From here an office utilizes knowledge and expertise to encourage research diversification and proactively fosters new research relationships. In order to support research with the potential to improve the quality of life for our global population, the driving force supporting this research must be diverse.
If Necessity is the Mother of Invention, then Who’s Your Daddy?

A brief overview of intellectual property rights in academia

By Amy Spicer

n occasion my office will be asked to review a contract on behalf of a faculty member who wishes to pursue consulting with a biomedical company, typically a drug or device manufacturer. These consulting arrangements occur through license agreements between the university and a company that plans to commercialize an invention owned by the university. The company may wish to have the expert advice of the inventor in order to best prepare to go to market with that invention. The advice of the inventor can also help companies with the rigorous steps required in an FDA approval process for new drugs and devices.

Often, these contracts specify that any invention or intellectual property (IP) developed by the faculty member during the consulting project will be the property of the company. According to the University of Michigan Technology Transfer website, IP is defined as “inventions and/or material that may be protected under the patent, trademark and/or copyright laws, and sometimes by contract.” Yet these IP clauses in consulting contracts can conflict with policies at many universities, notably, Michigan, California, Minnesota, Cornell, and Stanford. The policies typically hold that the university has the first right of ownership of IP that is created by a faculty member employed by that university. Usually under these policies, the royalties from licensing an invention will be shared among the university, the inventors, and the schools and/or departments in which the inventors hold an academic appointment.

Notably, at Cornell, a faculty member may request permission to separate his or her effort related to an outside activity from effort related to an outside activity from effort at the university, so that IP developed during the outside activity will not fall under the university’s claim of ownership over faculty created IP (Cornell University, 2015).

An agreement to license IP will set out the rights and responsibilities related to the use and commercialization of IP. These agreements usually stipulate that the licensee must work to bring the IP to use for the public good. In general, a licensee is selected based on whether the university believes the company will be able to commercialize the technology for the benefit of the general public. In some cases, the university will choose a start-up company as the best licensee due to the start-up’s focus and intensity on developing the invention. Other times, an established company with proven experience in similar technologies and markets can be the most successful choice (University of Michigan Tech Transfer, 2014).

IP rights can also be an issue when faculty members sign agreements with other institutions to do research; the issue of who owns any IP developed during the course of that research can be sticky. In these cases, investigators should be sure to involve their university’s office of technology transfer. That way, an “inter-institutional” agreement can be entered into wherein one of the institutions will take the lead in protecting and licensing the IP, sharing expenses associated with the patenting process and allocating any
licensing revenues (University of Michigan Tech Transfer, 2014).

The University and Small Business Patent Procedures Act of 1980, better known as the Bayh-Dole Act, gave universities the right to claim title to inventions created through research supported by federal funding. It was intended to be an economic development initiative to link academic innovation to the overall economy. Prior to the Act, rules about patent rights were varied, depending on the federal agency providing the funding. The overall government approach was that no single company should benefit from publicly funded research; therefore, only non-exclusive licenses would be granted. This deterred many companies from applying for licenses for academic inventions, due to the financial risks of investing in development of the invention, only to have competitors license the same invention once they knew it would be commercially viable. In 1978, there were 28,000 patents for inventions created through federally-sponsored research. However, less than 4% of those had been licensed (Loise & Stevens, 2010).

Before the Bayh-Dole act was implemented, no new medications developed through federally funded research at universities had been brought to market. Since the act went into effect, there have been more than 150 FDA approved drugs marketed for various diseases including cancer and HIV (Landrino McDevitt et al., 2014). In 2015 at the University of Michigan, there were a record 164 option and license agreements signed, and 160 U.S. patents issued for items as varied as new surgical instruments, genome sequencing software, and a massive open online course for contract law (Guest, 2015). Since the implementation of the act, rather than gathering dust on some federal agency shelf, inventions developed at universities have been patented and licensed so that they can be used to help patients and physicians around the world. One pivotal case related to the Bayh-Dole Act was the 2011 Supreme Court decision in Stanford University v. Roche Molecular Systems. At the center of the dispute was ownership of a patent on a popular diagnostic test for HIV which had been developed by a Stanford faculty member, Mark Holodniy, working in partnership with scientists from Cetus. When Dr. Holodniy began working at Stanford, he agreed to assign invention rights to his employer. However, when he visited Cetus, a small biotechnology company later acquired by Roche, he signed a confidentiality agreement that included a clause assigning invention rights to Roche. Roche commercialized the assay developed by Holodniy and Cetus, and Stanford approached Roche for a share of the proceeds. However, negotiations between the company and the university were not fruitful, and Stanford filed a patent-infringement lawsuit against Roche. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Roche, finding that Dr. Holodniy’s confidentiality agreement with Cetus was superior to the agreement with Stanford (Kesselheim and Rajkumar, 2011).

An important lesson from this case is to foster a greater awareness among our researchers of the importance of IP clauses in contracts. Creating a balance between ensuring independence of judgment and fostering the transfer of inventions to use for the public good is a delicate task. University policies, federal regulations, and professional society guidelines, to a certain degree, have been created to support the innovative process while protecting subjects from harm.

So, to keep your researchers out of any messy situations, i.e., having to answer a “Who’s your daddy?” question about their inventions, here are a few helpful tips regarding IP rights when entering into contracts:

- Do not sign any contract without reading it thoroughly. For example, watch out for clauses that would give away all of your IP rights, not just the rights related to the IP developed during the consulting engagement.

- Researchers should always have a personal attorney review any contract before signing it, since the contract would be an agreement between the researcher as an individual and the company, rather than a contract involving the university as the researcher’s employer.

- Be aware of your institution’s polices on IP rights. The policies are generally available on the university website. When in doubt, reach out to the technology transfer office for guidance.

- Before signing a consulting contract, check with your university technology transfer office, office of research, or conflict of interest office to be sure that your rights and the university’s rights are protected.

References

Interested in learning more about IP?
Check out NCURAs micrograph, A Primer on Intellectual Property or Online Tutorial Intellectual Property in Research Agreements at www.ncura.edu

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The Offices of Inspector General at NSF and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are continuing their audits of the implementation of pilot payroll certification systems. This was previously agreed to by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). HHS OIG is conducting the audits of the two University of California institutions, University of California – Irvine; University of California – Riverside, while NSF OIG is responsible for the audits at Michigan Technological University and George Mason University (GMU). After the four individual reports have been prepared and the audits are completed a capstone report will be prepared to provide overall results and summarize issues identified at all four universities. Audit reports have been issued on two of the four audits.

HHS OIG released its audit of the University of California in December 2014 where it determined that the certification system could not be assessed. NSF released its report, dated July 31, 2015, of George Mason University. This report presents the findings at GMU.

The payroll certification pilot started at GMU in January 2011. The audit was announced on March 11, 2013 with an audit scope of January 2, 2010 through March 31, 2013. The GMU report contains two findings: 1) internal controls over the support for labor charges to NSF awards, and 2) information technology controls over the protection of payroll information. The audit scope spanned labor charges under both the effort reporting system and the pilot payroll certification process so that the audits could develop an understanding of both systems, as implemented by GMU.

Effort Reporting System

For salaried employees, the effort reporting process at GMU began with entering information in the payroll allocation system using an appointment letter showing the salary level and award account to be charged. The award information, along with knowledge of all other employee workload cost categories, was used to establish the percentage of effort in the payroll allocation system with the total allocation equaling 100 percent. The effort can be amended using a form as needed, for changes in workload effort or changes in projects/activities. Researchers, (frequently graduate students) typically only work on one award at a time, so their effort was not often distributed across multiple awards or activities at the university. At the end of each semester, a printout of each employee’s distribution of effort signed by either the employee, or someone with first-hand knowledge of the employee’s effort.

Pilot System

George Mason’s process for initiating research salary charges was the same under the pilot as under the prior effort reporting process. The difference is that GMU’s annual certifications included individual salaries (dollar amount and percentage) charged to the respective awards for all employees who worked on the project during the reporting year. The PI is solely responsible for certifying annually that salary and wage expenses are “reasonable in relation to the work performed” for all employees included on the report. This certification meets the requirements stated in the FDP pilot as well as OMB Circular A-21 requirements under a “Plan-Confirmation” method of payroll distribution. However, the certification does not report effort on other awards the individual worked on during the reporting period, which the audits found as a risk. The concern was whether the pilot system’s shift away from certifying 100 percent of individual employees’ efforts put federal funds at an increased risk of improper allocation.

An additional control in the pilot process that is not part of the prior effort reporting process is a requirement for bimonthly reconciliations of award ledger and expense data. The department administration performs the reconciliations and certifies that all charges and credits to the fund or organization have been reviewed and are supported by appropriate documentation.

Audit Results

1. GMU Needs to Strengthen its Internal Controls to Ensure Labor Charges to NSF Awards are Adequately Supported

The most prevalent issue the auditors found in examining payroll transactions was late certification of effort under the pilot system. The auditors’ position was that the late certifications resulted in GMU not having timely support for payroll expenses for which it had already been reimbursed. When reports are certified months, and in some cases years, after the work...
is done, it puts the reliability and accuracy of the supporting documentation at risk. In addition, the auditors found that GMU was not completing bimonthly reconciliations timely. Because the bimonthly reconciliations provide interim verifications between the longer timeframe of the annual certifications, timely completion of the interim checks improves confidence in the annual certification of labor charges under the pilot system.

The auditors stated that the majority of the problematic transactions were the result of GMU failing to follow its own internal policies and procedures. Although GMU’s policy required it to transfer costs certified more than 120 days late from the sponsored project, the auditors did not find any instances when the university credited NSF for costs charged in violation of its own policy.

Funding change forms were used in both the effort reporting process and in the pilot to make changes during the course of a project. The auditors noted only one error on the 14 change forms reviewed. The error related to a transfer of funds, from a non-sponsored account onto an NSF award account in order to expend the available funding under the award. GMU provided no support that the charge involved actual work performed on the award.

The auditors’ review of 14 bimonthly reconciliations under the payroll certification system found only two that were completed correctly. Of the remaining 12, nine were not signed by both the preparer and the approver, two were certified late, and one was certified prior to the end of the reporting period. As a result of these problems, the university lacked assurance that ongoing expenditures under the pilot payroll certification system were being made for the intended purpose. This interim control is critical to assuring that the annual certifications are accurate.

A primary concern of the audit was to determine whether the fact the pilot system does not require certifying 100 percent of each employee’s effort increased the risk of improper allocations of payroll. The auditors found that full allocations remain recorded and available within GMU’s systems. Nonetheless, when PIs certify the salaries charged to their awards, they do not have records of full payroll allocations for employees who worked on their projects. Visibility over full payroll allocations provides greater assurance that project costs are accurate. Therefore, making full allocations available to PIs would be useful in assuring payroll charges to federal awards are accurate. Additionally, accounting for full allocations of employees’ time could be an important control to help ensure that overcharges and inaccurate charges do not occur.

2. GMU Needs to Strengthen its Information Technology Controls to Protect Payroll Information Auditors identified the following areas in which IT controls needed to be strengthened:

The auditors found that GMU did not adequately manage access controls as required by university policy. The stated that this weakness could permit unauthorized users to obtain or alter sensitive information and gain access to financial records. Examples cited were that 701 accounts had passwords that had not been changed within 210 days of the auditors’ scan, and 140 passwords had not been changed in more than 1,000 days, while the accounts remained unlocked.

Auditors found that some adjunct faculty had expired passwords, but their accounts had not locked and they still had access to the system. Auditors found 146 accounts that had expired but were not locked; of these 132 accounts had been expired since 2011. GMU officials told us that they plan to institute a supplemental reconciliation process to ensure that accounts are locked in a timely manner.

The auditors also found that GMU did not install security patches to the Banner Oracle database in a timely manner and did not update the risk assessment for Banner to reflect major architectural changes to the system, as required by university policy.

Late certifications under the pilot system was the most prevalent issue identified in the transactions sampled. For example, certifications of labor reports we found to be in error were an average of 224 days late.

The auditors stated that if institutions use the pilot, they need to ensure that they have strong internal controls to ensure the payroll charges are adequately supported. If schools are going to certify the documentation less frequently, they have to be more diligent in ensuring that the control procedures are communicated and adhered to on a consistent basis. Additionally, maintaining the full allocation of payroll to each individual’s activities is important to ultimately ensure adequate support for Federal labor charges. Having direct visibility of each employee’s full payroll allocation, including percentage allocations assigned to other awards or projects, is important to a PI to ensure the percentage assigned to his or her project is reasonable. Accounting for full allocations of employees’ time could be an important control to help ensure that overcharges and inaccurate charges do not occur. There are challenges with any payroll allocation system, and strong internal controls are the key to ensuring taxpayer funds are appropriately charged and adequately protected from misuse and abuse.

GMU officials generally agreed with the findings and recommendations, and acknowledged that institutions under payroll certification systems must have strong internal controls to ensure payroll charges are adequately supported.

Charlene Blevens has worked in the financial area in both the public and private sector in various capacities for more than 25 years with more than 13 years’ experience at universities in Research. She is the author of the Summary of University Audits, Settlements and Investigations located on the Cost Accounting Listserv at www.costaccounting.org. Charlene is a certified public accountant, certified research administrator, certified fraud examiner and holds an MBA from the University of Houston.

December 2015
Leading Across Generations:

Embracing the Changing Work Landscape

By Denise Moody and Rosemary Madnick

Research administration is a complex career where we are continuously facing new federal regulations and forced to develop, communicate, manage, and enforce institutional policies with many internal and external constituents to include faculty, researchers, central and department administrators, peer institutional collaborators, sponsors, agencies, and auditors. Leaders in research administration face further challenges in hiring and development of staff, minimizing turnover, decreasing burden, and managing people. The diversity of generations in our current workforce and reflected in most research administration offices adds a further layer of complexity that must always be considered when juggling the regulations, policies, people, systems, and organizational structures. There is value each generation brings to the workforce. The core similarities across all generations is respect and trust. Leaders need to be credible and trust the people they work with directly. There is an opportunity for leadership to model the way and embrace the changing landscape.

Sharing an Appreciation for the Changing Work Landscape

For the first time in history, there are four generations in the workplace, each one bringing its own set of core values that shape how work is viewed and approached. Stevenson breaks down the four generational groupings of employees in the workplace and in the higher education classroom as follows (2014):

- **The Traditional Generation (born pre-1945; 8% of the workforce)** are considered loyal and dependable both to their supervisors as well as to the organization. They are described as appreciating formality and preferring a top down chain of command, and they are in favor of making decisions based on what was done in the past. Their core values include respect for authority, conforming and being disciplined. As a result, they are characterized as dedicated, risk adverse, least likely to welcome change in a work environment and believe hard work and sacrifice are the price to pay for success.

- **Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964; 30% of the workforce)** are competitive, prioritize work over personal life, and prefer recognition for their accomplishments. Baby Boomers are considered the workholic and comprise the majority of the workforce. Their core values include optimism and involvement.

- **Generation X (born 1965-1980; 17% of the workforce)** are confident and self-reliant, comfortable with technology, and aspire to achieve work and life balance. Gen X’ers are typically not dedicated to any single organization and will likely seek change and transition more often. Their core values are skepticism, fun and informality.

- **Generation Y or Millennials (born 1981-1995; 25% of the workforce)** are optimistic, entrepreneurial, and are constantly seeking to develop themselves professionally. Gen Y’ers are team-oriented, goal-oriented, and willing to work hard. Their core values include realism, confidence, extreme fun, and social.

The American Management Association provides some overall cross-generational leadership strategies that include reenergizing compensation and benefits, expanding communication strategies, making mentoring constant, and developing strategies to ensure knowledge transfer and organizational memory are captured (2014).

Leveraging Leadership Across Generations through the 3 C’s

Creating an environment where multi-generations can function is essential. Leadership should leverage what each generation has to contribute in order to impact employee morale and productivity. Munro states that our goal should be to “make every communication an opportunity for a powerful connection” through “curiosity, courageousness, and cultivating leadership” (2015).

- **Curiosity** – Rather than passing judgment or making assumptions on a colleague who might be from a different generation, approach everyone with an open mind and focus on the ultimate goal of the task at-hand. Team members should be interested in understanding the strengths all generations can bring to the table. It’s up to each of us to find commonality from multiple perspectives and approaches in order to achieve the ultimate goal, whether the task might be a new system implementation, policy development, toolkits, or process checklists. For instance, a Gen X'er might make the assumption that a Traditionalist or hasn’t worked from the many years of experience under their belt. Baby Boomers may be better able to explain the “Why” when it comes to teaching regulations, but a Gen Y'er may be better able to explain the “Why” in training material that would be easily understood by fellow Gen Y'er.

- **Courageousness** – If we expect colleagues not to pass judgement based on the perceived generational stereotype, then we must have the
Cultivating Leadership – Leaders need to ensure everyone understands the ultimate goal and foster “curiosity and couragelessness” with their staff. When interviewing for new positions, it is important to pull out strengths and not pass judgement or make assumptions based on the candidate’s generation. Teams should be built in order that everyone brings different strengths that are all needed. Leaders should encourage differences, whether they come from multi-generational representation and/or natural personality traits. Some of the best teams have a person from every generation, and some of the best employees might have traits that have nothing to do with the generational stereotype.

“Connection Killers”
Munro states that these “connection killers” should be avoided by both leaders and colleagues (2015):

Failure to value everyone – As part of cultivating leadership and serving as the example, leaders should support and value everyone in the group. This seems so simple, but often we find it is easier to show favor to those members who are most like us in both generational backgrounds as well as personalitites. Leadership should appreciate and pull out strengths from everyone continuously. Rath and Conchie state that “If you spend your life trying to be good at everything, you will never be great at anything… this approach inadvertently breeds mediocrity” (2008). A well-rounded team with multiple strengths and skillsets, which can come from cross-generational members, is optimal.

Letting ego seize center stage – As leaders, we need to step aside at times and avoid “upstaging others”, even if unintentional. This approach will not allow members to be “curious and courageous”, so no one benefits from understanding and appreciating everyone’s strengths.

Making assumptions – The opposite of being curious would be to pass judgement and make assumptions. This is sometimes unavoidable, but if we keep ourselves in check, we can improve this biasness.

In conclusion, although there might be generational conflicts in the workplace, it is important to understand that when leading a diverse group, it is helpful to look past the stereotypes. Miller provides a perfect summary for leaders to consider in this changing landscape (2013):

Appreciate the differences between the generations.
Acknowledge diverse perspectives on issues.
Arbitrate when you find yourself working across generational lines.
Adapt your style as needed to accomplish the goals of the organizations.

References

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Well, not everything. And PIs are decidedly not livestock. But even though I didn’t adopt my two Pembroke Welsh Corgis with research administration in mind, in the years I have lived with them I have noticed several parallels between their “project management skills” and our work in proposal development. Here are some of the ways in which they guide others from a starting point to a common destination and the similarities to our pre-award activities, whether we’re working with a single PI or a team.

A primary characteristic of herding dogs is strategic thinking – They are intensely goal oriented, plan several steps ahead, and have a clear sense of how to work progressively toward an objective. In proposal development, we need to strategize, planning upcoming applications and their timelines while also considering how they fit with longer-term goals.

They also continually keep an eye on both details and the big picture – When working, herders need to be aware of all the moving parts and how they function as a whole. We need to pay attention to the components of an application and the particulars of the sponsor’s guidelines in order to create a cohesive, persuasive submission.

It’s crucial to be able to anticipate problems and change tactics as needed – Coordinating the actions of others doesn’t always go according to plan, so we need to be willing to shift our approach quickly and creatively. Even when we’ve created what seems like a good plan and seem to be making steady progress at the beginning of proposal development, sometimes we need to reassess and adjust, such as giving more attention to certain aspects or individuals, as well as reworking our timeline and expectations.

Success relies on constant communication – Both herding and proposal development are never solo work, but always a collaboration requiring plenty of feedback with all involved. We succeed when we keep our RA colleagues and others on campus updated throughout the process as needed and communicate clearly and often with our PIs.

Because everyone needs to keep moving together, it might take a bit of heel nipping now and then – When things stall, gentle nudges and reminders, whether by phone call or email, can help. Barking tends to be counter-productive.

Lastly, they are always optimistic and take joy in their work. – We could all learn a lot from dogs in this regard.

And in case you’re wondering, yes, they can herd cats.

Sally J. Southwick is the Director of Grants and Sponsored Programs at Siena College. She has been a research administrator at predominantly undergraduate institutions for well over a decade and specializes in providing support to faculty who are applying for grants from federal, state, and private agencies. She thanks the Corgis for their inspiration and can be reached at ssouthwick@siena.edu
James “The Ragin’ Cajun” Carville is America’s best-known political consultant. His long list of electoral successes evidences a knack for steering overlooked campaigns to unexpected landslide victories and for re-making political underdogs into upset winners.

His winning streak began in 1986, when he managed the gubernatorial victory of Robert Casey in Pennsylvania. In 1987, Carville helped guide Wallace Wilkinson to the governor’s seat in Kentucky. Carville continued his winning streak with wins in New Jersey with Frank Lautenberg elected to the US Senate. He next managed the successful 1990 gubernatorial campaign of Georgia’s Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller, including a tough primary win over Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, and in 1991, Carville—who had already become prominent in political circles—drew national attention when he led Senator Harris Wofford from 40 points behind in the polls to an upset landslide victory over former Pennsylvania Governor and U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh. But his most prominent victory was in 1992 when he helped William Jefferson Clinton win the Presidency.

In recent years, Carville has not been a paid political consultant for any domestic politicians or candidates for office, instead focusing on campaigns in more than 20 countries around the globe, including leading Ehud Barak to victory in his campaign to become the Prime Minister of Israel in 1999.

Carville is also a best-selling author, actor, producer, talk-show host, speaker and restaurateur. His titles include All’s Fair: Love, War, and Running for President (with wife Mary Matalin); We’re Right, They’re Wrong: A Handbook for Spirited Progressives; And the Horse He Rode In On: The People vs. Kenneth Starr; Buck Up, Suck Up... and Come Back When You Foul Up; Had Enough? A Handbook for Fighting Back; Stickin’: The Case for Loyalty, 40 More Years: How the Democrats will Rule the Next Generation (2009) and the New York Times best seller, It’s the Middle Class, Stupid! “(2012), co-authored with Stan Greenberg. He also authored a children’s book entitled Lu and the Swamp Ghost.

In their second joint memoir, Love and War: Twenty Years, Three Presidents, Two Daughters and One Louisiana Home (January 2014), Carville and Matalin take a look at how they—and America—have changed in the last two decades. In their two distinct voices, they pick up their story from the end of the 1992 Presidential campaign to their new life in New Orleans today where their efforts to rebuild and promote that city have become a central part of their lives—and a poignant metaphor for moving the nation forward.

Along with pollster Stanley Greenberg, Carville founded Democracy Corps, an independent, non-profit polling organization dedicated to making government more responsive to the American people. Democracy Corps has conducted over 200 national, congressional and local surveys, interviewing over 220,000 American voters during the past 10 years.

Carville can be seen on news networks worldwide. He is a columnist for The Hill newspaper which publishes daily when Congress is in session and serves as a Professor of Practice at Tulane University in New Orleans, where he lives with his wife Mary Matalin and their two daughters.
Aspects of life are impermanent, incomplete, and imperfect – but still beautiful. The appreciation of that beauty has come to be known as the Japanese aesthetic wabi-sabi. Difficult to truly define, a Westernized view of wabi-sabi is often associated with celebrating the organic transformations and simple variety that can be found everywhere.

Through art and design, wabi-sabi is in the weathered look of a stone lantern as it’s reshaped by the elements over the years. The lantern becomes more unique and interesting as time passes. Any blemishes that might appear only lend it character. Although it may not look the same as it did years ago, that doesn’t diminish its value.

In a tea house, wabi-sabi is in the simple shape of a rustic tea cup with an asymmetrical bend or small crack. The cup represents the care that comes from being handcrafted, as opposed to something mass produced for identical structure. The imperfections and basic form give it a personality that modern technology can’t reproduce. There is no need for an opulent or complex structure to give it significance. It’s one-of-a-kind, and as it continues to change with use, its irregularities become part of its realistic charm.

Even in our youth-obsessed culture, wabi-sabi can be found in an individual who greets aging with grace, rather than clinging to the appearance of youth. Our bodies simply can’t stay the same over time and are never done transforming. This doesn’t mean we give up on staying healthy or feeling beautiful; only to accept that we all have imperfections and will continue to mature. It’s a part of what makes us distinctly who we are.

Whether it’s a physical object, a process, or a person, though it’s not permanent, not complete, and not perfect, it should still be valued and even celebrated. Viewed through the lens of our profession, this translation of wabi-sabi can reflect the evolving, diverse, and beautifully flawed nature of research administration.

Nothing is Permanent
In university research offices, whether departmental or central, change seems to be the only constant. Staff members come and go, new SOPs are introduced, and updated computer systems are implemented. Revised sponsoring agency requirements and guidance documents are released. The profession itself continues to adjust as technologies emerge and funding priorities shift. These challenges may initially be awkward, but ultimately they can be opportunities for professional and personal growth. Coworkers who join the team may bring unique knowledge and energy to support the office. New systems and procedures can make processes easier as they encourage us to grow and learn. And if those procedures turn out not to be beneficial, they can always be changed again.

Without transformation, the workplace would be a stagnant environment that could become tedious. Just as a stone lantern can become more interesting as it changes, research administration can too. And learning to embrace those changes can work to sustain the profession, while also helping it evolve.

Nothing is Complete
Learning never ends. Not in research administration and not in life. Thanks to the never ending changing state of affairs, our skill set is never complete. The need and success of NCURA conferences and ongoing trainings are a testament to that. In order to be knowledgeable and to stay current and versatile, training is ongoing.

Not only is education never complete, but is the preparation for a grant submission ever really complete? No matter how seasoned the professional, things can always go wrong at the last minute that no amount of preparation could have foreseen. From a technological or system problem, to the last minute discovery of a missing piece, there is always the potential for an error. Significant proposal content may even need tweaks at the last minute if the PI decides it’s not really finalized. Even after the submit button is pushed, doubts can linger as to if the proposal was as thorough as possible. We just have to acknowledge this and move on.

The same can be said through the context of wabi-sabi and the acceptance that our physical
appearance is never really through evolving. No matter how we prepare for aging, the changes will persist. While every effort can be made to freeze time, we will never be physically complete and certainly will never be perfect.

Nothing is Perfect
Research administration is made up of a wide range of individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives — and none of them is perfect. Each person has strengths and weaknesses. The beauty is that what one colleague lacks is what another colleague might bring to the table. Our specific experiences mold us into who we are - and we all have some cracks around the edges.

Considering the unique nature of each individual’s contributions will make the most of partnerships and generate more comprehensive proposals. What may not seem to make sense initially is what may ultimately lead to a nonlinear way of thinking that drives us down avenues we might not have ventured down before. This diversity is especially important today with the emphasis placed on Team Science and collaborations between fields and with other universities. The potential for exciting discoveries may be just around the corner, or on the other side of the globe.

What makes us all the same, no matter where we are, is that we all share in our differences and imperfections. In the end they can be beneficial and build more rounded work environments and new initiatives. A cracked tea cup may not be an ideal vessel, but the imperfections are what bring it to life. The wabi-sabi principle can be seen as the balance and contentment to accept and appreciate the flaws that are inevitable. We should prize those cracks in ourselves, in others, and even in our profession.

Conclusion
This narrow view of the complex philosophy of wabi-sabi is a long way from its origins in Zen Buddhism. But I believe it can be applied to individual lives and careers to help bring them into focus. Using a new perspective to accept and enjoy the quirks and characters that make research administration can make the everyday twists and turns of the work journey more enjoyable.

Wabi-sabi is not about straight lines. It’s about the curved path that ebbs and flows along the way. Many people have followed a winding road to research administration as a profession. Most of us working today probably never thought this would be our destination. My own career path came by way of “the road less traveled” and I’m sure many others share a similar story. The truth is I wasn’t certain how I’d fit into this world. But everyone is one-of-a-kind and has perhaps found a niche that seems to fit just fine. Cracks and all.

Nothing is permanent, nothing is complete, and nothing is perfect. My translation of the spirit of wabi-sabi in research administration seeks to celebrate the diversity that comes from all of that. I’m no expert in any of these realms and that somehow makes me ideal to write about their impermanence, incompletion, and imperfection.

References

Joanna Kentolall, MS, is a Research Coordinator at the Florida Atlantic University College of Nursing, where her primary role includes proposal development and submission. She is also a freelance writer with a background in communications, public relations, journalism, and the arts. Joanna can be reached at jkentolall@fau.edu
There is plenty of diversity within university research administration, but one way in which there is astounding variance is how administrators manage and track their sponsored research and research compliance processes. Additionally, size and resources also vary from universities with tens of millions in total awards, to ones in the low thousands. The volume of a university’s research expenditures makes a great impact on its quality of research administration as a whole. However, despite size and research volume, we are finding that institutions of all sizes share many of the same core challenges. One of the current core challenges on the front burner is the patchwork nature and lack of integration of all the solutions on which they depend to get their jobs done well. While the nature of the data and the overall pain points may be relatable across each institution, the methods that are complicating and frustrating the core of their administrative work vary widely. What most end up with is a crazy quilt solution where every square has its own unique pattern, but it lacks an overall design on the whole, each piece only loosely stitched to those adjacent to it.

The first method we see, and often used by smaller institutions, are spreadsheets. It is a straightforward solution, which costs very little and can be reasonably managed as long as the volume of research stays very low. While spreadsheets can work wonders for business of all kinds, it takes plenty of determination, industry insight, and a tech-savvy hand to ensure that the research administration process all comes together properly. With no guide other than your own wits, it is far too easy to make mistakes using this method, perhaps not even realizing the error until much later. On top of this, the sheer amount of time that it takes to manually enter the data, organize the information, and keep all of this running smoothly can amount to far more than one might expect.

On the larger end of the spectrum are universities with a multitude of grants and millions of dollars who turn to large enterprise or eRA (electronic Research Administration) systems to help them manage the vast amounts of data and enable administrators to do more with their time by automating as many processes as possible. In contrast to the spreadsheet system, software that is built specifically for research administration helps to ensure no gaps are left in the process and that possible errors are avoided. Some eRA systems even include enhanced features like shareable reports and customizable dashboards, which add incredible value and saves administrators a great deal of time.

In the middle of the spectrum is the method of homegrown database systems. As budgets shrink, the demand to do more with fewer resources has become a way of life. Where a university with a low volume of research might be able to manage awards with spreadsheets, an increase in volume quickly demands that the power of databases/database concepts be utilized to optimize efficiencies with available staff. As one might imagine, a university does not simply move from a small to large volume of research overnight. It is a gradual process that can happen at varying rates of change. It may not even happen intentionally, but simply one small fix at a time; which adds up to a custom solution that gets the job done, though sometimes in a rickety and jumbled manner. Without dedicated programming staff, another challenge of this method can be version control, where administration staff struggles to ascertain which set of documents is the most recent. Not knowing where things are with looming proposal deadlines can be a quagmire. While counting on your IT team to form a more efficient solution may be convenient, it is important to remember that they are specialists in delivering technology, not building their own software. Having your internal IT team build a homegrown database for grants management often results in solutions with odd technical restrictions, compelling the office to adopt unorthodox processes. When these universities eventually decide to migrate to an eRA solution, they may take these processes with them, which can require expensive customizations to the software. Ultimately, the risk is that deadlines for project reporting, cost extensions, modifications, and regulatory compliance are not being met.

And when all is said and done, many universities are now stopping at these evaluation points to realize that they may use all three of these methods! A spreadsheet here, a small ancillary tracking system that is homegrown over there, with maybe one eRA module used by only a select group to create a system that still doesn’t mitigate the compliance risks. Their patchwork solution has sewn all of these disparate methods together.

When you get down to basics, Research Administrators need to reliably track information by people, by departments, and by project/award. Information in the HR/person database includes everything from the standard identifying information including salary, date of hire and supervisor, but also more esoteric information as to whether the individual has a visa (including type and expiration) or security clearance. Individuals accrue vacation and sick leave balances, the tracking of which is sometimes left to the department to track. As such, modules must be built to request/report absences and compute the remaining accrued vacation and sick leave balances.

Information about the Project includes standard information such as sponsor, award information, type of award (RO1, etc.), and increments of funding, but also information about restrictions and reporting requirements as outlined in the terms and conditions of the award. Project level information also included research compliance (IRB, IACUC and Conflicts of Interest). Within these criteria there are those who have a financial system...
managing the request and tracking of purchases yet these systems rarely integrate well to provide a dashboard of all information to effectively manage the post award administration of these awards.

The intersection of people and projects enables you to identify PI and other account approvers, create budgets, project costs to confirm sufficient funding exists for the tasks at hand (as the research progresses), verify and approve travel and certify costs and effort retroactively. In connecting people to projects through cost projections, you can easily feed your payroll system the appropriate cost allocations, as well as prepare the data required for effort certifications.

Whatever the current solutions are, the reality is that what most universities are trying to achieve is to sync, integrate, communicate, interact, and compliment all of these processes in the most efficient and comprehensive way. In addition, it needs to be secure, auditable and flexible over time. The best solution allows central management of the university to have available information/reporting on the University’s entire portfolio of research. In order to achieve a coordinated university-wide solution, the first step is to build an effective business case to help with understanding of all the different workflows and processes in their current state. In review of these system approaches, a level of risk should be assigned that aligns with compliance, and if applicable, regulatory requirements for federal awards. Should the business case result in a recommendation for a more effective software solution that would help with the collection of information, it is recommended to document the steps that could lead to the development of a requirements document to find an eRA to manage the system. This would quicken the pace of going out to bid to begin to build a future solution. Often a strong business case is all that keeps an organization from reaching the next level. It seems that the larger the organization, the more levels of approval would be required. This business case which includes the following will be the catalyst for making such a change if there are associated costs or eRAs identified.

- Identifying current business process that must stay and collecting those requirements from multiple users
- The process of evaluating eRAs
- Project management and identifying the right project team
- The cloud vs. on-premise deployment
- Planning your IT budget

Streamlining the procurement process will set an organization up to begin the implementation process in a thoughtful and comprehensive way. It will avoid scoping issues and help to manage expectations. Though in the past eRA systems were usually limited to institutions with substantial research volume and large budgets, new cloud-based technologies are making comprehensive research administration solutions available to medium and even smaller sized institutions. If you have a crazy quilt solution that is holding you back, take the initiative for your team to identify your organization’s top requirements and translate them into an action plan for moving forward. Collect and understand the tools and resources to weigh the options and review these resources used by your colleagues.

By Nancy Watterson-Diorio, Randy Ozden, and Cheryl Birch

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Cheryl Birch, MBA, CPA has been a member of the senior management team at the USC Institute for Creative Technologies since January, 2000. As Director of Finance, Operations, and Human Resources, she oversaw development of the USC/ICT’s departmental database and participates in the Central Campus committee(s) having oversight of USC central Research Administrative systems. She can be reached at birch@ict.usc.edu

December 2015
THANKS to the generosity of two long-time NCURA members, the NCURA Education Scholarship Fund was established to support the professional development of research administrators and to advance the profession.

A committee of NCURA members meets regularly to plan fundraising events and other activities that generate awareness about the Fund.

At the national meeting in August, NCURA members contributed more than $20,000 to the Fund, raising the grand total of dollars raised so far to $61,493. Much of that money was raised through the regional “bucket challenges.”

The Scholarship Committee recently decided to change the rules for the “bucket challenges,” such that any funds raised in the regions throughout the year can be counted toward their buckets at the annual meeting. We hope that will encourage even more creativity in local fundraising efforts.

Once the Fund reaches $100K, we will open up a process by which NCURA members can apply for scholarships to pursue additional education for their professional development.

You can help us meet this goal!

If you have not already donated this year, please consider making a tax-deductible gift before December 31. You can send in a check or donate on-line:
http://www.ncura.edu/Education/EducationScholarshipFund.aspx

Even a little makes a difference!
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Many thanks to our partners at the Washington Hilton for contributing $5,000.

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Thank you to those who contributed during 2015:

NCURA President’s Circle ($1000 - $4999)
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In August 2015, we presented a senior forum session on metrics called, “Research-Related Metrics: Operational Monitoring, Planning and Strategy” at the NCURA Annual Meeting. The participants were experienced and well versed in data extraction, reporting, and analysis. There were common themes in our discussion and also in the follow-up questions after the session. One theme stood out. Almost all participants wanted to know how to best present data. This article provides readers with concrete suggestions for the components and visual structure of short interactive reports that pull out important themes, often called dashboards.

Dashboards present key metrics at a glance, which is an important but difficult task. As research administrators, we know that the volume of data and information can be overwhelming. However, there are ways to effectively distill and depict our data. Consider some examples from the federal government.

One tool that the government is using is the federal IT Dashboard, which is a set of web-based graphs and tools that allows federal agencies, industry, and the public to view detailed information about federal investments in technology and track how well they are performing. The IT Dashboard has pie charts that represent the current distribution of investments and graphs that show the trend of the distribution over time. The dashboard is interactive, and viewers can click on the graphics to get at underlying detail (www.itdashboard.gov). Another example is the Federal Workforce At-a-Glance dashboard, released by the Department of Personnel Management to support diversity and inclusion at the federal level by fostering an “inclusive work environment” (www.opm.gov). A third example comes from OMB, which recently unveiled an initiative that will allow agencies to measure and track progress on federal infrastructure projects, including transit, railways, and bridges “to further improve the efficiency and quality of review, which would cut review timelines while also improving environmental and community outcomes (www.performance.gov).”

Not surprisingly, dashboards are also becoming more widely used at universities, non-profit organizations, and in state and local government because they are a helpful tool for analyzing data at a glance. So how exactly should a dashboard be designed and what information should it contain? Below you will find some ideas for distilling and depicting data in a meaningful way.

What Should a Dashboard Look Like?
The goal is to design useful dashboards that meet the needs of research administration. The best people to reach that goal are research administrators who understand what data elements matter and which are going to be measured.

Anyone tasked with making raw data useful has seen the challenges of building dashboards first-hand. The concepts of presentation, on-demand availability, and of course usefulness can seem overwhelming. However, breaking down the concept of dashboards and how they are designed can be done with visual representations of data. But why do we visualize?

Visual representations, in the form of dashboard data are valuable to decision makers who need status updates for important information. Dashboards, when designed and implemented correctly, are powerful tools that can enable successful business intelligence. What sets dashboards apart from standard reports? Dashboards are interactive windows into the metrics.

One of the largest benefits of dashboards is that they give the reader information at a glance. Instead of leafing through a dense report packed with too much information, dashboards provide visual images that depict status and progress and indicate trends. People can find patterns and can understand what is working, what is not, and what is different. Dashboards allow users to drill down into useful data while filtering unnecessary noise, allowing managers to have an understanding of what is broken and what is working. Dashboards, when done correctly, will verify these things, provide an ability to identify what is different, and determine if the outlier is a problem or a part of the solution.

How are dashboards built and which should you use? Bars, lines, or pies? Sounds like a fun restaurant, but these are choices that will become important as the dashboards begin to take shape.

The process for building dashboards varies, but articles and guidance suggest that the overall process should be similar no matter the final product. In the 2007 article, Seeing is believing: Designing visualizations for managing risk and compliance, Rachel Bellamy breaks the process down into a series of steps. In very simplified terms: 1) interview the users to understand the need; 2) design the prototype and review; 3) deploy, and; 4) update. Look to the federal examples for ideas, and then add the details and complexities of research administration.

By Catherine Breen, Govind Narasimhan, and Thomas B. Spencer
For example, for research administrators a financial dashboard may provide a look into the top five highest dollar proposals that will be submitted in the next three months. This dashboard may be a simple visual representation of five bars that can drill down into the details if selected.

Another financial dashboard may be the direct expenditures for all faculty that can be divided into departments or into high visibility or high priority projects.

It is only natural to reflect on what data elements to measure and understand, which may differ based on the internal or external users, and what provides meaning to one’s institution. Financial metrics that may be meaningful include proposal and award data, as well as expenditures and revenues. Cost transfers, deficits, residual balances, cash balances, A/R, and deferred revenue are all candidates for meaningful financial metrics when measured as ratios. Academic medical centers may contemplate measuring gifts dollars received from patients on a clinical trial, hospital or routine care revenue received from patients to measure value of clinical research, the ratio of diverse population in a clinical trial to measure the underserved groups are being represented in research, and service center operations supporting certain patient care delivery. Universities that offer start up and retention funds may measure the return on investment (ROI) by developing metrics to measure productivity ratios from such faculty by analyzing proposals, awards, revenues, publications, etc. from faculty who received start-up funds. External users of metrics and financial data may review financial items of interest, such as sponsored projects revenue (direct and indirect), endowment value, revenue from investments, number of days cash on hand, etc.

Non-financial data elements that may offer measureable metrics include percent compliance with conflict of interest; publications including author position; percentage of faculty diversity for women and minorities; ratio of tenure / tenure track faculty to fellows, trainees and post docs; and research space by department vs. research space by PI.

Questions and discussions following both the National and Regional NCURA meetings this year demonstrate that there is a growing appetite in research administration for metrics, analytics, and dashboard reports. This trend, when tied to the Federal Data Act, cannot be ignored. Learning the process to create dashboards and what they contain is a powerful process. NCURA and its members are at the leading edge of knowing the process to create dashboards and what they contain is a powerful process.

NCURA and its members are at the leading edge of knowing this trend, when tied to the Federal Data Act, cannot be ignored. Learning how to create effective and useful dashboard reports can help you highlight your data in meaningful ways and capture the attention of stakeholders and decision makers.

References


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Managing the sponsored projects enterprise is challenging and complicated. Many institutions have an increased focus on securing external funding, be it sponsored research or other types of grants. We face an increasingly complex compliance environment, demand for accountability and reporting, reduced or flat budgets, and skeletal staff.

For many smaller institutions, these difficulties are even more pronounced because of paper-driven processes. These institutions face such time-consuming obstacles as:

- Antiquated approval processes – running around the campus to get the required signatures on routing forms and other documents
- Inconsistent budget preparation because PIs and campus administrators are using their own spreadsheets
- Manual transmission to Grants.gov, and the resulting need to fix submission errors
- No central repository for project-related data
- No coordination with compliance offices
- Double-entry into disparate systems
- Inconsistent or non-existent reporting

As institutions come to rely on sponsored dollars to greater extents, it often becomes apparent that the infrastructure to support this type of growth must be enhanced by updated systems in order to improve efficiency, but how does an institution begin to evaluate solutions? There are the obvious steps:

- Define the inefficiencies you are trying to address
- Define goals for implementing a system
- Identify functional and technical requirements for a system
- Determine IT’s role
- Allocate budget for a system, including not only the cost of the software installation/implementation, but intrinsic costs such as training, communications, enhancements, and ongoing support

At this point, evaluate your upper management support. Without the full and unreserved support of top management, put the brakes on and break out a new box of pencils.

Business process design and redesign
Business process design is a major factor in any system implementation. Often the actual processes in place have not been codified at all or updated in years. This is a first crossroads: to strive and keep the current processes in place as they are, or to use the system as a reason to update them. The temptation can be to let the system dictate what your new process will be and there are times when that will be the case, but it is better to start with what you want and make the system conform to you.

Wish list versus critical features
As you work with your business processes, decide what is essential in a system and what would be nice to have. Nothing blows a budget faster than scope creep – starting with an out of the box system and then going back to the vendor repeatedly to pay for ‘just one more little change. You must know at the time you purchase what the system will do, what it won’t do, what it can do if you want to pay someone to program it, and what impact any changes will have on future releases. There will, of course, be changes that must be made. Expect to:

- Develop a process whereby requests for enhancements can be made and then vetted by the appropriate parties, including any costs for the enhancement, and
- Be very firm in managing expectations.
Don’t assume that because something seems like an easy request to fulfill that it actually will be. On the other hand, those things that sometimes seem the hardest might be a matter of changing a single parameter. Ask, and make sure you understand the answer and the implications before making any promises about changes.

Budget
The software itself is only a portion of the total cost of the implementation. There are communication costs, training materials costs, enhancement costs, ongoing support costs. There may be other costs as well, though, like a clause in your contract that states that you must supply a full-time programmer for a period of time. There are the costs to ‘backfill’ which nobody can afford to do and it isn’t like it is easy to just pop someone into research administration for a few months.

There are also ongoing costs associated with support and upgrades, as well as training and IT support. Be sure you know your limits.

Timeline
Do you have the time to implement a system properly? Perhaps the biggest fallacy is that big implementation projects come in on time. Do you have the time to implement a system properly? Perhaps the timeline as well as training and IT support. Be sure you know your limits.

1. Major (and minor) proposal deadlines
2. Vacations
3. Other time demands on the staff
4. Data loads
5. Documentation/training updated to fit campus
6. Timing of campus roll-out
7. Legacy data that must be transferred

The quality of the legacy data can greatly affect not just the timeline, but also the budget. Deciding what data you simply must have and what it would be nice to have must be considered. Do you really need the last 10 years of data? What particular pieces of data? How will the information be used? It would be unusual for the data to not need some kind of cleansing, and this will likely have to be done by an IT professional and take time.

Project Team
Who will comprise your core project team? Will you have someone who can be devoted to managing the project? This often seems to fall to the Director at a PUI, making a hard job even more challenging. Lobby for an in-house project manager, even if you are planning to use a consulting firm to help with the implementation. You will also want to include an IT expert, even with a hosted solution.

Communications
It is easy to overlook a formal communications plan, but keeping the campus informed and invested is critical to success. Departmental staff and PIs from a surprising number of institutions say that they knew little or nothing about a new system until they were told they needed to be trained on it. If it is possible to keep end users involved in the analysis and redesign processes they will stay engaged.

At least some communication, particularly at juncture points, should come from as high up the food chain as possible. The senior leadership must be united in committing to the project’s success, and this commitment must be apparent to everyone on campus. And, while leadership doesn’t need to know about every single configuration detail, they do need to be aware of any issues that are causing delays.

That said, there may be workflow disruptions. Any new technology takes time to learn, and there will always be days of frustration and delayed productivity. These are natural occurrences in any implementation and should be expected.

Training
Training is essential for success. There are multiple ways to think about training, and each situation is campus-specific. If you have a training unit on your campus, involve them early. Plan the kinds of training you will provide: demonstrations, classes, one-on-one, online, and who will receive the training and in what order. This may depend on how you choose to rollout the system. You want to plan so that people are adequately trained by the time they need to use the system, but not so early that they forget what they have learned.

Who will develop the documentation? Who will do the actual training? If this will be the responsibility of the central office staff, it needs to be taken into account in your initial planning, as it will greatly affect your timeline. Are you planning to use outside resources or can you use departmental people who are particularly good with new systems?

While adequate up-front training is imperative, so is ongoing training as new people come to campus or move into new positions.

Post Implementation Change
Thinking about the steps to implementing a system is one thing, but it isn’t too early to think about changes that will occur after you go-live. There will be upgrades and new training needs, on-going questions and the occasional system failure. Be sure you understand the post-implementation support offered on the product you choose.

With all of that in mind….
Make a clear and extensive list of system requirements. The more specific you are, the more detailed a vendor can be in responding to you. Remember that you are dealing in a different type of environment than university to university, and be as detailed as possible. Assume nothing. Also keep in mind that you are looking for a good fit, and that might not necessarily be the flashiest product out there. Ask around and see if anyone is willing to share their own list of requirements/RFP.

Check references and meet the vendors with whom you would be working. Make sure they understand research administration in your type of environment. Supply examples specific to your institution for demonstrations. Most of all, be comfortable with your decision and confident as you move forward, expectations and realities firmly in hand. Best of luck!

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December 2015
Earlier this summer at the meeting of the national board of directors and regional leadership an idea was spawned — Research Administrator Day — a day to recognize the contributions of research administrators for the work we do every day in support and advancement of the research enterprise at universities.

Around the globe, faculty and scientists are conducting ground-breaking research that benefits everyone and research administrators are critical to that success. Wherever there’s research, you will find a research administrator; partnering with faculty on submitting proposals, negotiating agreements, monitoring finances, interpreting regulations, and satisfying the requests of our sponsors. On September 25th research administrators around the world took time to recognize and celebrate their efforts and contributions on their campuses.

Hopefully each of us at our institutions will embrace this day on an annual basis to highlight and celebrate the vital role that we play in advancing research. Be sure to mark your calendars for next year!
Today is YOUR day

September 25th is National Research Administrator Day

YOU are the foundation.
YOU provide structure.
YOU do high-pressure work to meet tight deadlines.
YOU help scholars navigate administrative complexities.
YOU protect our institution.
YOU share your expertise to build our profession.
YOU make a difference.
YOU are a Research Administrator and YOU are amazing!

Thank YOU for supporting the research mission of CU-Boulder!
Bring YOUR Team Together to Learn and Open a Dialogue in Your Office on These Important Topics!

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Save Your Institution Millions: Mitigating Institutional Risk of Research Misconduct

Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.

MATTIE STEPANEK

More information and registration:
www.ncura.edu/Education/OnlineEducation.aspx
The topic of “Research Administration” in general brings to mind very diverse thoughts – even among Research Administrators. Do you work for a Medical School? Do you work in a central office? Do you prefer Pre-Award tasks or Post Award tasks? How each of us progresses through the day is different. Yet, perhaps the key unifying factor is that we all want to travel an enriching and rewarding career path. The tools to do just that are right within reach!

Whether the current role you play is more focused, or, as in the case of most departmental administrators, more all-encompassing, my personal experience is that you can never know too much. Investigators appreciate someone who can guide them wherever they need to go. So, with that, comes the idea of “diversifying our portfolios as research administrators” – after all, our profession is largely based on providing quality customer service to our faculty.

Diversifying Your Portfolio

The Why. Gaining as much experience, education, and information as you can get your hands on pays dividends throughout your career. You’re able to keep a cool head – while also helping to lower the anxiety levels of your investigators. In these days of limited funding, I’d much rather be able to offer a well-rounded set of skills than a narrow focus. If you have a broader focus, you’re more likely to have the skill-set to take the bull by the horns – and as Research Administrators, we all know that no matter how many years we’re in the field, this is a constant learning process.

The How. Be innovative and branch out! It’s time to take your career into your own hands! There is so much knowledge out there to be gained, a lot of it at no cost other than your time and willingness to pursue it. The more contacts and sources of reference you have, the more extensive your library of knowledge becomes. The following touches on a few areas that come to mind – though I’m sure they are not “all-inclusive” by any means.

• Learn, keep current on, and utilize funding agency guidelines, and laws pertaining to research. Yes – unfortunately, this DOES mean reading the guidelines. Reading is vital – especially in the lives of pre-award. The agencies put down in black and white what they are looking for – it’s our job to read the guidance and follow it. Reading guidelines includes funding announcements that give you guidance for applications, policy guides / statements that advise you throughout the lifecycle of the grant, and notices that may inform you of changed guidelines, etc.

• Cross-train. Volunteer for different tasks within your own department. Often, supervisors are so swamped that they would be more than willing to delegate a different task to a willing and enthusiastic employee. Inquire whether your school has an interdepartmental “exchange” program to gain experience in different areas. Some institutions offer this type of training for more junior administrators in order to give them an idea of the whole picture as it pertains to research administration. The idea of “cross training” is becoming more popular – and
for a very good reason — knowing different aspects helps you become more efficient in your own area, as everything ties so closely together (Brewer, R.).

- **Seek a mentor and/or ask directed questions to senior administrators.** Ask a senior administrator, in your own organization or outside, to be your mentor. You can ask that person about his/her experiences to gain insight. Asking around in general regarding other areas of research administration are of great help in determining what areas interest you the most.

- **Search for training opportunities.** You’ll find some within your own organization. Most central administrative offices offer some sort of training for their institution’s administrators. NCURA also has traveling workshops, online workshops, and webinars — which have proven invaluable to me. (In fact, in my current position, I had no idea how to negotiate / set up budgets for clinical trials prior to taking the NCURA online tutorial on clinical trials...shhhh!) Go back to school — online, that is! If you’re looking to gain a higher education and / or more formal training, there are now several schools, as you know by looking through this magazine, that offer Master’s degrees and/or certification in Research Administration.

- **Become certified.** Searching for training options without breaking the bank? Click through and read items in the Body of Knowledge for the CRA / CRPA / CFRA exams. You can learn at your own pace — and whether or not you decide to take the exam, there is a wealth of great information to guide you throughout your career. (The RACC also offers full day study sessions for a minimal fee. You can find their information here [http://cra-cert.org/examschedule.html](http://cra-cert.org/examschedule.html) under “Body of Knowledge Review Sessions”). For an online meeting option, Virginia Tech has an organized study group and you don’t need to be from Virginia Tech to join. For more information on this CRA Study Team, please contact Vicky Ratchiffe, Manager of Research Education and COI Administrator at vratchiffe@vt.edu or 540-231-7964.)

- **Take available compliance training modules.** Regarding compliance, each institution has its own training structure / modules that researchers are required to take prior to beginning their research. Just recently, I’ve learned a few things while taking my institution’s training modules for IACUC, HIPAA, and IRB. Knowing what is required of your researchers helps tremendously when guiding your young researchers through the various processes. (Not to mention, if you are sitting for an exam, these compliance topics do surface quite a bit!)

- **Use technology to your advantage.**
  - **Twitter** offers a variety of topics of interest to research administrators. While I’m definitely not an expert on Twitter, I do know that if you “follow” certain organizations, you get helpful little tidbits from time to time — ranging from changing processes and procedures, changes in agency guidelines, all the way to innovative new research in the world!
  - **Google** — ’nuff said! What can’t you find on Google? Yet — it consistently surprises me that this continues to be the easiest way to amaze your investigators with your vast and expansive knowledge! (I’m pretty sure everyone has to know about Google, right?) If you search using the right combination of words, you can come up with a wealth of knowledge and ideas. If one set of words does not bring the desired result, try again. This gets me out of pinches 99.9% of the time.
  - **The World Wide Web** — you CAN visit other universities and see how they operate — right from the comfort of your own office. The recent NCURA webinar, entitled “The Research Administrator’s Toolbox” repeatedly noted the advantages of just that. There are templates to be found out there for just about every task. Modifying to suit your needs, rather than re-creating the wheel is much more time effective.
  - **SmarterAdmin.com** — Do you use Excel extensively? I recently discovered this resource online, dedicated specifically to helping Research Administrators simplify their reporting tasks. Smarter Admin has a wealth of free resources on their website. They also have a very popular webinar series where they cover the more powerful aspects of Excel; all while gearing their focus toward the needs of Research Administration. (This source would be the most helpful for the administrator whose organization relies mainly on Excel for reporting purposes / information gathering)

- **Participate in NCURA Collaborate.** I feel a little Déjà Vu here... Seriously — you learn a lot! For fun, I read what people post to see what I know the answers to. If I can add something, I do. More often than not, I’m just absorbing like a sponge. This is my morning entertainment while I’m sipping coffee and contemplating what I need to accomplish for the day.

- **Research & Write.** Volunteering to write an article gives you an excuse to delve more deeply into an area that may be of interest to you. Or the intent may just be to help you gain more of an understanding of a topic that you know very little about. You’ll also gain networking experience out of the deal! (Not to mention, if you currently have CRA status — this is a great way to earn credit toward your certification renewal!)

**The Ugly.** Constantly looking for ways to expand your knowledge and skills will help you find your niche in Research Administration. You’ll be an invaluable asset to your faculty and your senior administrators — and, as a senior administrator, and excellent source of information to your staff. If you have other tips and/or sources of information, please do share — we can all benefit! ☺

### References


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As a member-staff driven organization, the success of NCURA is a result of the time and commitment provided by our member volunteers. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize those who have dedicated countless hours to support their colleagues and our professional staff by taking a leading role in furthering the goals and the values of the organization.

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NCURA would also like to thank ALL of our volunteers, who have dedicated time to plan, present and assist in the execution of our conferences; contribute to the educational resources provided to our members; foster professional networking and knowledge exchange; and enhance the NCURA community.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with your professional association, visit NCURA’s Volunteer Central to learn more about available volunteer opportunities. Please contact Triniti Bunton, Staff and Volunteer Services Associate for more information at bunton@ncura.edu or by calling 202.466.3894.

We’ve worked hard to ensure this list represents all of our volunteers completing service terms, but if we missed you, please accept our apology and our sincere thanks for your contributions to the research community.
Research Administration in Japan

Lift Off! Beginning of the Japanese University Research Administrators’ Network

The 1st Annual Conference of the Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan

By Tadashi Sugihara

On September 1st and 2nd 2015, the 1st Annual Conference of Japanese University Research Administrators (URAs) was held in Nagano, Japan. More than 400 people attended, and there were 25 sessions, 21 oral presentations and 38 poster presentations. The Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan (RMAN-J) has started to unite Japanese URAs and reach out to the rest of the world.

*Note: The opinions about RMAN-J in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of RMAN-J itself.
The first annual conference of university research administrators, Japan

In a very hot and humid late summer, we celebrated the first annual conference of university research administrators, or URAs, in Japan, held at the Nagano Engineering Campus of Shinshu University, in Nagano Prefecture. This was the first official meeting organized by the Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan (RMAN-J). RMAN-J has more than 250 individual members, and 17 universities who are organizational members. The conference welcomed more than 400 people from over 100 organizations, including universities and research institutes. Eight companies joined the conference as sponsors. Though the size of the conference is much smaller than the Annual Meeting of the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA), this 2-day conference was a great success and it is fair to say that it was a historical milestone for Japanese URAs.

The road to the conference: Behind the scenes

It is only quite recently that any staff have been formally called URAs in Japan. The number of URAs in Japan has dramatically increased since 2011, when the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (or MEXT) initiated a program to develop and employ university research administrators. The program was designed because as researchers in Japanese universities obtained more funding for research, they found they had to spend more time on non-research issues. Universities were almost certainly aware of the issue, but nobody had yet come up with a really good comprehensive solution. The government initiative was therefore a “magic bullet”, giving universities financial support to hire URAs to improve the environment for researchers. In the 2011 fiscal year, five universities hired URAs under this program. These universities made a big effort to establish a URA system and emphasize its importance to their researchers. As part of this, one of the five organized a URA symposium each year. Ten additional universities were supported by the program the next year.

Under the similar aim but by a different program, MEXT had supported universities to reshape the organizational structures. Kanazawa University, which was one of such universities, recognized the importance of the URA system and started organizing a meeting every year to facilitate mutual understanding among administrative staff in universities and research institutes. The first meeting was held on February 5th, 2010, and preceded the first URA symposium in 2011. This meant that there were two URA meetings each year.

It seemed obvious, however, to bring them together and form a network of URAs. The first joint meeting was held in 2013 at Kyoto University. The organizing committee held a session to explore possible directions as a network of URAs. They also asked attendees about the idea of establishing a Japanese URA network. These discussions eventually resulted in the establishment of the RMAN-J, and its first Annual Conference.

Selected topics discussed in conference

There was a wide range of subjects discussed during the conference, of which three seemed particularly notable.

University Ranking

On September 30th, 2015, the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2015–2016 were announced. Rankings provided by THE and others are of great concern to Japanese URAs, because the Japanese ministries and agencies such as MEXT specifically mention the rankings in their official documents. Several problems in the ranking system have been identified, including the smaller number of social science journals, reducing the number of possible publications and citations, and the exclusion of Japanese (and other non-English) journals from the citation databases used. Some presentations therefore discussed how the impact of research in humanities and social sciences could be appropriately measured.

Open Science

Recently, there are now expectations of clear, comprehensible explanations of research outcomes, especially for research that is publicly-funded. Scientists also have noticed the importance of disseminating research findings to the public. In Japan, the funding agencies clearly state the importance of explaining research outputs and outcomes to the public, setting this out in the application forms for certain research grants. The Cabinet Office of Japan also began to promote this trend. The concept of Open Science in the Japanese context includes not only Open Access to published research articles but also sharing of experimental data. Open Access is a key part of dissemination, and data sharing means that other researchers can also use the data, analyzing them from different viewpoints and potentially establishing new findings. An executive summary of the report for promoting Open Science published by the Cabinet Office of Japan can be found at www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/sonota/open-science/150330_openscience_summary_en.pdf

Global Network

The meaning of the term “global network” here is twofold, including both the network of Japanese URAs and the URAs in other countries. As well as its steering committee and the conference committee, RMAN-J has two task forces covering training programs and public relations. It is also planning to create a task force on international collaboration, to help Japanese URAs make contact with the wider URA community, and support collaboration between universities. RMAN-J therefore plans to establish a platform through which URAs in Japan and abroad can make contact and discuss, for example, joint applications for external research grants. There were sessions on the introduction of the task forces, as well as the importance of and methods for disseminating research results outside Japan.

Forward March!

I feel that I witnessed a great start for RMAN-J. But we cannot rest on our laurels. It is vital for RMAN-J to develop and grow, to be able to provide something new to future conference audiences, so that regular attendees do not lose interest.

The importance of RMAN-J still has to be recognized by those universities and research institutes that are not yet organizational members. The leadership of the steering committee is therefore critical. I suggest that small groups of members may want to start more casual regional meetings, to help to demonstrate the importance of the URA network to those who are not yet members.

I think we can say that Japanese people are not internationally renowned for their ability to organize and enjoy parties. Internationalization is a keyword in Japanese universities, however, so perhaps Japanese URAs should take it upon themselves to change this reputation and set others within the universities and abroad on the path. They could, for instance, organize party-like informal meetings locally (maybe over a glass of beer) and attend the annual meeting of NCURA to dance the night away with NCURA members from around the world.

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Diversity is no longer defined primarily by race and gender, but has broadened to include differences in cultural backgrounds, disabilities, age, sexual orientation, race and gender. Both the level of diversity and the rapidly aging workforce are significantly impacting organizations today and in the future.

According to quote by Ohio Congressman Rob Portman in the Washington Post (July 21, 2014), “every day for the next 19 years, 10,000 baby boomers will reach age 65.” Retiring boomers comprise the largest segmented group of well-educated workers leaving the workforce that has ever been experienced in U.S. history. Without proper succession planning, the departure of so many well-educated experts will cause a void within our own workforce in almost every organization. The 2015 Research Administrator Stress Perception Survey (RASPerS) provides data that supports this graying trend in research administration. The RASPerS data showed research administrators with over 20 years of experience or over the age of 60 is our fastest growing demographic group. It is predictable that this group will be retiring within the next 5-10 years in very high numbers. In order to best support sponsored programs management responsibilities for the research community, it is crucial that we create a cadre of well-prepared leaders to step in as those with 20+ years of experience exit the profession.

As graduate faculty teaching in the UCF MRA program, we both have witnessed increased diversity among our profession and the MRA students. Since the inception of our program in 2011, half of the graduate students that have enrolled are ethnically diverse (59%), originating from 4 different countries (Uganda, Pakistan, Rwanda and Nigeria), from eight different areas of specialization, and 25 different states. As a cohort of students navigate the series of courses, we also witness deeper interactions and a greater depth of understanding among our students from radically diverse cultural backgrounds, geographical regions, ages, specializations, experiences and types of research organizations, including an Indian Reservation. This same level of diversity and interaction is not always obtained in our own professional environments or in non-cohort graduate school models because interactions are often sporadic and occur while working on a single project, over a short period of time, or within a single role.

The cohort model is designed to foster an environment for close interaction with fellow research administrators having very diverse backgrounds as they proceed together through the graduate program over a two-year period. Interacting with a colleague from a foreign institution, different type institution, or an investigators seeking funding from different funding streams over a length of time creates a more diverse network for peer-to-peer learning. It is clear, based on the past three graduating cohorts, long-lasting relationships are established due to their engagement in the program. These students are able to discuss and study a varied number of professional topics in depth such as: financial management, contract negotiations, strategic planning, future trends...
performance assessment, organizational models, leadership, etc. -- bringing together a host of expertise that is shared with other cohort students. Sharing information, experiences, and their lives is possible because the extended amount of time working together allows for the necessary level of trust to be built for open and meaningful communication.

In addition, faculty are engaged and interact frequently with students on a weekly basis to discuss research articles, class material, and issues of the day and how those relate or are applied in our own experiences and institutions. Students and faculty often coordinate efforts to meet face-to-face at professional conferences and meetings. We will never forget when one MRA student working in a developing country was bedridden for months with the upcoming delivery of twins and how the entire cohort was concerned and supportive. It is amazing to watch as each individual creates their own online presence and the cohort develops their own sense of community. Many travel to Orlando at the end of their studies to meet and celebrate with one another and to walk across the stage to receive their graduate diploma. It is much like a family reunion.

As “more seasoned” research administrators, we are honored to have the opportunity to mentor the next generation of leaders in research administrators through the graduate program. We see it as a personal mission to promote our students as they advance professionally and personally and watch them continue as high quality research administrators striving for professional excellence. We purposely embed a strong sense of public service and ethical integrity into the MRA program and the individuals we teach.

A graduate degree in the field matters—it demonstrates commitment to the profession, provides a universally recognized level of academic achievement and it also demonstrates mastery of the unique body of knowledge and experience required for advanced research administration professionals. 2015 RASPerS data now indicates that a degree at the Masters level is the norm for research administrators. In order to compete for the best jobs, a Masters level degree is going to be essential for those who want to rise in leadership within the profession. Executives with an eye to the future recognize that MRA programs are the best avenue for much-needed succession planning for upcoming gaps in research administration leadership and for the professional development of the best and brightest employees to become accomplished and well-versed in all areas of research administration.

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Dr. Jennifer Shambrook is the Director of Research Programs and Services in the Office of Research and Commercialization at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. She has a PhD in Public Health Promotion and Education. Her research interest is occupational stress and its impact on health behavior in research administrators and research administrator demographics. She is the author of the 2007, 2010 and 2015 Research Administrator Stress Perception Surveys. She can be reached at Jennifer.Shambrook@ucf.edu

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**Email. We love to hate it. We get flooded with it and yet we need to respond. Here are some quick tips for keeping your sanity.**

**Think before you click!**

1. **Folders, Tags, Labels and Sorting, Oh My!** All email platforms provide a user with an ability to sort through email automatically, label it and organize it for later reviewing. Sorting through the mountain of emails hitting your inbox and letting the technology do the work for you will save your sanity in the long run. Also remember to set aside time to review the wealth of information from NCURA and other LISTSERVs and stay current.

2. **Respond Within 24 Hours.** Even emails that are information only (directed to you specifically) should be acknowledged. If a more thorough response is required, let the sender know you are working on it and set a time for when you think you will have it complete.

3. **Document and CC Responsibly.** Emails are a way of documenting verbal and face-to-face meetings (which we know are time intensive but generally more productive). Ensuring your team and constituents are all the same page helps to stem the flow of repetitive emails. If a sender CC’s the entire College, you should not do the same. CC’s and BCC’s are only intended to ensure that individuals that may be impacted by the content of the email are informed (can we drop the passive-aggressive behavior already?).

4. **Clean It Out.** Once you respond or have at least read the information, just like paper, it needs to go somewhere – in a folder, archived or deleted. Don’t let your inbox look like an episode of Hoarders! Being able to quickly search emails and know what is actionable will be easier if filed away. Most email platforms allow you to make it a “To Do” list from emails rather than leaving them in your inbox as a way of staying on top of things.

Jeanne M. Viviani, Contracts & Grants Manager Florida Polytechnic University
The Riddler is a criminal mastermind who has a compulsion to challenge Batman by leaving clues to his crimes in the form of riddles, puzzles and word-games. Most days I feel like Batman being taunted by the Riddler – with riddles in the form of new applications, policies and funding opportunity announcements, or changing guidelines. The adaptation to the constant challenge is sometimes arduous and challenging but makes the job of a research administrator both rewarding and fun. Tackling these challenges requires us to get out of the Batcave, hit the road in the Batmobile and face the challenges head on.

When I attend NCURA conferences, or visit colleagues at large research institutions in the US, it always surprises me that many research administrators have one role (and sometimes two) within their administrative process. In these institutions it seems that the diversity within research administration comes from multiple people working together to fulfil a goal to submit and manage (mostly) US grants, which works perfectly if the resources are available. Research administration offices outside of the USA are generally much smaller so each individual is required to take on diverse roles to complete the tasks within the grant administration chain.

The Karolinska Institutet Grants Office is the largest research support office at a university in Sweden. However many people in our office work across funding agency borders, in both pre- and post-contract, as well as have roles with strategic grants management, communication and education. The breadth of the research administration role at smaller universities and organizations is even more pronounced and in some cases one to two people are responsible for all of the grant-related research administration at their institute. It is often difficult to maintain the breadth of knowledge required to stay up to date with the changes regarding US federal and EU funding – not to mention the support required for application to all smaller, and national, funding agencies. A number of strategies can be used to allow for growth and development within a research administration role. In my opinion, the most efficient strategies are adaptation, networking and communication.

Adaptation to the changing needs involves openness and willingness to diversify. The knowledge required can be obtained by creating a network of peers who are seeking to achieve the same goals. Informal and formal societies, both national and international, have been created by individuals wanting, and needing, to grow and diversify. Membership in these societies and active participation is an invaluable tool supporting the research administrator. These societies are often, although not always, one of the primary avenues supporting communication in any given area. In Sweden we do not a formal society to link individuals working with US grant applications and management. However, through Swedish and European networks, as well as NCURA, we have made connections and have the support structure we need to maintain up-to-date knowledge regarding funding and grants management.

Diversification to work within several areas is a positive aspect of our work. Without the riddles to solve a research administrator is more like Dilbert than Batman. Via our adaptation to the need and support via our networks we can continue to grow as individuals and as research administrators. In the words of the boy wonder “Holy Uniform Guidance Batman.”
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Imagine being able to accurately predict the final balance on an award, or how a change in your effort will affect the bottom line, or even catching potential proposal submission errors before they occur. With the ability to build Excel templates encompassing all these things, along with other functions both you and your PI would like to see, you can have a system which promotes efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility tailored to your department’s perspective.

Unfortunately, some institutions frown (or outright prohibit) such “shadow systems” citing existing functionality in their accounting system or stating the resources they put into the current system outweigh the resources needed to build a second module. But make no mistake: although the institution’s software is the system of record and subject to audit, having checks-and-balances templates only enhances your due diligence while supporting your PI and, more importantly, the institution itself.

In building your own system(s), you can create transparency while developing personalized templates catered to the unique needs of the department. Whether it’s as simple as a grant/contract proposal template or a worksheet that includes more complex functions projecting spending through the life of the grant, this system can be a useful tool allowing even those with minimal Excel skills to obtain a quick status “snapshot” report.

Additionally, a successful system can establish a brand and identity for yourself as well as your department. In the creation of such systems, I find there are 3 major steps to success:

1. Decide what you want your template(s) to do: Is it salary projections? Expense reconciliations? Sub-recipient monitoring? A required documents checklist for a particular proposal? Or some combination of these things?

2. The second step will showcase your creativity: building your customized template. This includes functionality, data to be shown and understood as well as your vision realized.

3. Arguably the most difficult of steps has been saved for last: deciding its layout. Do you use colors? How many worksheet tabs? Will charts/graphs be useful or distracting the end user?

(Image 1) is a screenshot which mimics an institution’s finance system with the baseline “snapshot” template I built to mirror it. Its simplicity allows PIs a quick overview of a particular grant without getting bogged down by details, without needing to click around the institution’s system to find this info and without wasting any more time on their research!

For those researchers seeking more detail, they may need to delve further into the institution’s system whereas this same excel “snapshot” Excel template allows for expanded detail with the click of a button, in this instance, the salaries by person. To do this, they simply need to click the “+” button found to the left of particular expense categories to view the detail.

Many finance systems have complex algorithms/entry methods causing inaccurate projections - in particular, the biggest drivers of expenses: salaries and subcontracts. In an effort to keep this grant “snapshot” simple,
I incorporated a multi-tabbed workbook utilizing various tabs to itemize salary detail, subcontracts and Other Support (not shown). Those worksheets maintain a similar look and feel as the other sheets while being cross-referenced to this budget-to-actual “snapshot” template.

One final example of a template I built for proposal development (IMAGE 2). Much of it is automated allowing the PI to simply check off when a document is complete. It includes all the key data needed during a proposal: due dates, required documents and various workbook tabs and hyperlinks such as budget, contact info, etc. Further automation allows for auto-filled information required by an institution’s Sponsored Programs office in order to submit the proposal (i.e. Letter of Intent, Cover sheet, etc.) on other tabs within the workbook (not shown).

With such a structure in place, you help build trust and transparency within the department allowing others to work with a system they can use and likely have knowledge in. Such a powerful program as Excel can do many things with much of its functionality being easy to learn and rewarding once implemented. Using some basic tips/tricks, you can wow your colleagues while creating a usable, PI-friendly resource.

To help get you started, here are 3 of my favorite time saving functions I find most useful:

1. **Grouping:** found in the “Data” tab at the top of the worksheet, this allows you to hide/unhide areas with one click. Simply highlight entire rows/ columns and click the “Group” icon. A “-” will un-hide that section and when clicking the “+”, it hides it! To undo this at a later time, simply re-highlight the grouped section and click the “Ungroup” icon. (The function could also take the place of using the “Hide/Unhide” function.) Example: in the above “snapshot” template (IMAGE 1), PIs can view their expenses by cost category or itemize out for more detail by simply clicking the “+” options within the worksheet – in this instance, personnel detail.

2. **Conditional Formatting:** ever want a cell’s value to change colors based on its value? You can do so by highlighting the cell, going to the “Home” tab at the top of the screen and choosing “Conditional Formatting”, and then “Highlight Cell Rules”. Simply select the criteria you want to fulfill, type the value (or select the cell you want to reference) and choose which color scheme you want. (The function could also take the place of manually filling in cells with color.) Example: in the above “snapshot” template (IMAGE 1), the budget entered into the finance system (column AK) isn’t equal to Notice of Awards total (column AL) causing the red text to alert me of this discrepancy.

3. **Filtering:** this tool allows you to either sort or “filter” out variables within a column of data. Simply highlight the header row containing the data you wish to view a certain criteria for, then click the “Data” tab and select “Filter”. Click on the down arrow which now appears in the first row of the column and either select your sort preference or select the variables you would like to either see or not see without actually deleting any data! (The function could also replace of using the “Sort” function.) Example: Every month, I download all detailed grant expenses from the grant Start Date then filter out all automated costs (i.e fringe & F&A) so the PI can see the detail of their direct spending each month (feature not shown).

Other function favorites include: “Pivot Tables” which are used to summarize/consolidate massive amounts of data into a small group and

**Workbook/Worksheet Protection** to lock information in place ensuring no one can edit either the formatting or data without your password.

In addition to the functions outlined above, here are 3 of my favorite formulas:

1. **“IF” Clauses** (IMAGE 3): Have you ever wanted a cell to return a specific text if a certain condition is met or/true? By using the following formula in the cell where you want to see that value this can be done:

   \[ =IF([Click on Desired Cell]\ [Insert Desired Formula]\ ["Including quotations, type what you want to know to be true"], ["Including quotations, type affirmative response"], ["Including quotations, type if your condition isn’t met"]) \]

   In this example, I’m notified the F&A rate the institution is charging is not equal to the rate agreed upon by the funder.

2. **Calculate between dates:** knowing how much time is left in a grant period is critical. You can easily find out how many days remain by typing in:

   \[ =DATEDIF([Click on later end date],[Click on earlier date],"m") \]

3. **Concatenate** (IMAGE 4): sometimes I want a cell to display the values from at least 2 different cells in one cell. Here is that formula:

   \[ =CONCATENATE([Insert 1st cell to reference], [Insert 2nd cell to reference], [Insert 3rd cell to reference]) \]

   In this example, I title my sheet by Grant Name and internal Grant Number.

By having these visuals as well as seeing them work in real time, you can hopefully either get started or incorporate some of these ideas in your current system. I find if you want Excel to do something, it probably can - you just have to be creative in getting there. Whether it takes asking a colleague, referring to Excel’s “Help” option or even a few quick trips to Google and YouTube, you’re only a step or two away from the answer. Good luck!  

Patrick DeCoste has been in Research Administration for over 10 years, currently at Boston University. He has built a number of shadow systems for several major organizations in the Boston area both in the non- and for-profit arenas. He is an active NCURA member and can be reached at Patrick@DeCosteOnline.com
In Central New York, being “on the Hill” refers to being part of a collection of higher education institutions or the small businesses and neighborhoods that surround them – co-located on a physical hill in the city of Syracuse. Yet, despite close physical proximity and cross-over of students and classes, research administration services and communications between the Hill-based institutions is disjointed, albeit friendly, at best.

While inter-institutional research development discussions have been strongly supported in recent years through formal collaborations at the vice president and dean levels, there has been little institutional sharing and learning on the Hill among on-the-ground research administrators, apart from joint participation in a few NCURA traveling programs. In 2006, a few of us pre-award RAs from the Hill had the good fortune, however, to cross professional paths and form friendships at the NCURA annual meeting – a mere 370 miles from our campuses. In 2014, we finally began meeting intentionally to discuss local opportunities and challenges.

Our initial discussions have given way to an informal but strong network of higher education professional staff with significant pre-award responsibilities. This network currently provides:

- Collegiality and knowledge sharing in a non-competitive atmosphere;
- Mentoring for less experienced peers;
- Discussions of ongoing and upcoming research projects to facilitate PI-matching;
- Sharing of tangible resources, such as funding opportunities, templates, contacts, and strategies;
- Exposure to diversity of thought, outlook and experience in research administration.

The Formation of RDP@CNY

Over a period of a few months, initial brainstorming led to a wider invitation and the development of a calendar of regular activities – and Research Development Partners of Central New York (RDP@CNY) was born. The group’s founders challenged themselves to answer: How do we maximize opportunities and resources across local partner institutions? In other words, with dwindling travel budgets curtailing our offsite professional development activities, how could we maximize our localized knowledge to benefit the mini network we wanted to create? We were seeking to build new collaborations between our faculty and/or researchers, but also more selfishly to broaden our individual interactions, create a sense of camaraderie among a much-needed peer network, and to informally increase our individual professional development. Our initial invitations were met with unbridled enthusiasm, and our meetings quickly turned into a highly anticipated sharing activity.

Our Approach

RDP@CNY holds monthly meetings during the academic year, which rotate among member hosts. This gets us out of our seats and onto our neighbors’ turf. A common meeting is prefaced by the selection of a primary topic of discussion (usually determined at the preceding meeting); however, conversation topics are allowed to steer to items of interest brought up by attendees. We always set a loose agenda, comprising “Hot Topics” of the season (based on our shared love of an NCURA traveling program of the same name). But it is an open conversation, where the agenda is highly flexible, and there is a “low threshold” for contribution – meaning members can come and listen or come and contribute at their comfort level!
Members are sent email invitations to each meeting one month in advance, with reminders sent out a few days before each meeting. Members may also bring guests, who are “e-introduced” via email before the meetings. Meetings are set up two months in advance to plan for attendance by the most possible members. The overriding air is one of collegiality and equality, yet we thrive on our professional diversity. Often, topical discussions delve into a school-to-school comparison of methods. One of the most common questions at the meeting is, “How do you handle this issue on your campus?”

We purposefully try to broaden each other’s perspectives by discussing our own operational methods and intangible resources. This includes inviting each other to school-based research talks and training sessions, and exchanging weekly and monthly publications offered by each of our individual units. For example, the Falk College at Syracuse University has invited RDP@CNY members to their regular Research Colloquiums, with talks by their internal grant recipients – some of whom have served as collaborators with faculty from other RDP@CNY member institutions. The State University of New York (SUNY) Upstate Medical University has invited the RDP@CNY members to training sessions, including a recent program on data services. The F. Franklin Moon Library and the Office of Research Programs at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) publishes the Research Times, a bi-monthly newsletter highlighting awards received and relevant funding opportunities, which members of RDP@CNY now receive via ESF’s circulation list.

Each member of the group has brought something to share that broadens our perspectives on research development and pre-award research administration, outside of the silos in which we tend to work. Undoubtedly, in just over 18 months of activity, the group has helped to grow institutional capacity in research administration by incorporating diverse viewpoints.

**Communication, Resources and Results**

The use of formal and informal communication is an essential feature of RDP@CNY. Members reach out between meetings on the phone or via email to troubleshoot an issue or find a collaborator for a proposal. Through such communications, we strive to share our individual and institutional agency expertise/knowledge base, to reach out to each other for opinions and recommendations, and also to promote cross-campus events and workshops.

Much of our tangible resource sharing has been accomplished and archived for future use by the development of a Blackboard site open to current members.

Group activities from the past 18 months have yielded these results:

- Multiple cross-college proposal submissions to federal agencies and foundations, supported by close coordination among members of RDP@CNY;
- Retooling of internal grant programs, based on shared program designs;
- Facilitation of the creation of three new grant development positions at two other Syracuse University colleges (currently under review by human resources for posting) through assistance with job description writing and meetings with University administration for those
Colleges—successful, in part, due to RDP@CNY member assurances of a built-in support network for new hires;
- Greater recognition of the value of research development services at Upstate Medical University, including a commitment to re-funding a second staff line recently vacated due to retirement;
- Grant development services provided to two Syracuse-based nonprofits with University partnerships;
- Broader participation in existing programs among partners, to utilize time most effectively and reduce redundancy of information and/or training sessions.

Looking Ahead
In the next year, we plan to explore common issues surrounding data management plan development and data sharing. We intend to purposefully expand our knowledge and integration of library resources and services on our respective campuses. We will also use members as test cases to build profiles in tools for biosketch creation, such as SciENcv and MY NCBI, to better advise our researchers in the creation of the same. Finally, we are scheduling our first free, cross-institutional workshop on identifying funding opportunities. It will target departmental research administrators at our respective institutions. Our intent is to hold one such educational event per semester to engender greater networking and cross-institutional learning outside of our smaller group.

Conclusion
RDP@CNY, at a bare minimum, represents the successful cross-institutional trading of funding notices by email, the sharing of templates and other resources through an online platform, informal discussions of proposal development and support, and initial successful efforts at targeted PI “matchmaking” between our institutions. In reality, the broader impact is much greater. The home-grown exposure to diversity of thought, outlook and experience in research administration brought about by our efforts has already yielded multi-institutional operational benefits and evidence of personal growth — growth we cannot wait to expand upon, and which we encourage you to replicate! 

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A coach will typically help you find your own answers and approaches to leadership challenges rather than telling you what to do. That’s what I’ll do with your question and all subsequent questions. Plus, there is just a bit of context provided in your question, as in most questions. You shouldn’t take advice from anyone who only knows as much about your challenge as you described above! Too many pieces and facts missing. It is always this way: I often feel when meeting a new client that I am starting to read a thirty chapter novel starting with chapter eight, or three, or twenty-nine. The fun part is catching up with the rest of the book!

The heart, core belief of coaching, is that the person who comes forth with a need or challenge, as you have done, has the knowledge and skill to solve their own problems! (Let’s call the “person” the “client” now and in future columns.) This is different from consulting, where someone is hired to recommend a solution to a problem. What a coach brings is curiosity, insights, intuition and a belief that their client is up to their challenges. A coach helps their client discover solutions by supporting and challenging the client’s thinking, encouraging the client to draw upon emotions and their physical self to help identify paths and opportunities, and fears. A coach helps the client be accountable for their actions and growth.

With all of that as preamble, let me tell you from your brief question what I am curious about: If I asked you what you would see as a successful outcome for you and your team, what would you say? What facts or situation is prompting your question now? If I take your assumption as truth (we all have our own versions of the truth!), as leader of this team, how willing are you to delegate decision making? I would be asking you “what else is going on” regarding team communications, performance plans, absenteeism? I would ask you to describe how you became a team leader, and what you are enjoying and finding challenging, and why. If I were to ask one of your team members how they feel about their work, especially how engaged are they in the work, I wonder what they would tell me? I also am wondering about you, and how clearly have you stated to your team what you want them to do, and what decisions you want them to make?

In other words, I would ask you to reflect.

When people resist taking on their own work and making decisions — assuming the expectations of their work have been made clear — the reasons may be that they are fearful of something bad happening if they take initiative. You might first talk to yourself, and reflect on this statement awhile, write down your thoughts. Later in the week or following week, when calm and ready, consider inviting your team to comment: “May I make a request? I feel a need to have a discussion and I am here to listen (mean that when you say it). I am noticing that I am reviewing all of your work and I feel like I am making all the decisions. This is not working for me. I am wondering if it is working for you. Help me understand what you are thinking and feeling.”

I have a word going through my head that won’t go away. I could be entirely wrong, so disregard this if it doesn’t ring true to you. The word is perfection. I am wondering if you may be seeking perfection from your team, at some level. Perfection is not a bad word or a bad thing. If it veers off from a healthy search for excellence, then it can derail a team. Reason: no one knows what is good enough. Victories aren’t celebrated. People can only do wrong. People act and behave out of worry that they won’t please, rather than being autonomous and taking charge of their lives… in this context, their inboxes and functions. Ask yourself: if someone on your team took action, made a decision, and made a mistake how would you respond? What would others say if I asked them? Anyway, by introducing “perfection” to this discussion, I am making a huge leap and assumption. Bottom line: Use the opportunity you have provided yourself, with your question, to forge a closer connection and compassion for your team.

Garry Sanders is an executive coach and graduate of Georgetown University’s Certificate Program in Leadership Coaching. Garry is a long-time research administrator and recipient of NCURA’s Distinguished Service Award. He can be reached at gsanders@assistleadership.com and (518) 588-0992.
Greetings NCURA Colleagues,

The 10th Annual Pre-Award Research Administration (PRA) Conference is quickly approaching. Have you made your travel plans? Have you registered for the conference? Have you planned to try any new restaurants or see any new sites while in New Orleans? Don’t hesitate – make your plans now! You won’t want to miss the opportunity to experience all that this meeting and its theme (Change, Challenge, Opportunity: Building for the Future) have to offer!

To get you started in the planning process, we are excited to share with you some highlights and all of the latest news from the PRA program committee.

Keynote Speaker
We are delighted to share that our keynote speaker will be Shari Harley. Shari is the founder and President of Candid Culture, an international training and consulting firm that is bringing candor back to the workplace, making it easier to tell the truth at work. She is the author of the book, How to Say Anything to Anyone. Shari will share with us how to say anything in two sentences, which may be a challenge for some of us in research administration! And if that wasn’t enough to look forward to, all participants at the PRA conference will receive a complimentary copy of her book - and she will happily autograph it too!

Check out Shari’s website (www.candidculture.com) for more information. We are sure to walk away with some great tools that will enhance our ability to communicate in all aspects of research administration!

Track Highlights
In this magazine issue, we are highlighting Workshops, and the Compliance, Departmental, Research Development and Federal Tracks. Stay tuned for more information in the January/February issue of NCURA Magazine from the PUI, Medical/Clinical, International, Professional Development, and Case Studies tracks.

Workshop Track
The PRA workshop committee is pleased to offer 17 workshops and 1 Senior Forum. Workshop offerings span a variety of different topics and skill levels in research administration, such as pre-award basics, post-award basics for the pre-award administrator, Uniform Guidance implementation (2-part series), and developing and implementing training programs. Advanced workshops include topics such as clinical trials, federal contracting, export controls, and change management. An afternoon workshop is dedicated to creating a Research Development office, which may be of interest to smaller schools and PUIs. And for those research administrators looking to polish their career skills, three half-day workshops focus on career and professional development.

Compliance Track
The Compliance Track highlights includes a session entitled “Visitors on Campus.” This session looks into how we can facilitate visiting scholars to campus while simultaneously addressing potential compliance issues such as IP, health and safety and export controls. Another exciting topic is on Science & Money, which explores the need to mitigate risks associated with scientific integrity. Hot topics such as “The Life and Times of a Subaward” and “To Cost Share or Not to Cost Share: Changes, Impacts and Process” will be presented. Research integrity topics in the compliance track are “Research Misconduct” and “Managing Risks of Collaboration Compliance (IACUC, IBC) Across Institutions.”

Data and reporting are critical from a central administrative perspective, and the compliance track includes a sessions on “What is a General Ledger” ERP System and Why Should Sponsored Programs Offices Care?” Discussion groups include the Pre-Award and Internal Controls and How to Communicate Compliance Issues with Faculty. We also have a follow-up discussion group with Gil Tran from OMB on “Hot Topics, Technical Changes, & FAQs on the Uniform Guidance.”

Departmental Track
This year’s Departmental track looks to be a great one. Sessions range from “Budgeting 101 – A Holistic Approach” to “Strategic Planning for the Departmental Administrator”. Levels of expertise will range from basic to advanced. We will also have great discussion groups planned from “Shadow Systems” to “Multi-Institutional Proposals”. Also assembled is a great cast of speakers from all over the country, from wily veterans to a few new faces.

Research Development Track
The Research Development Track offers valuable sessions geared toward those who work in proposal development and in other aspects of research development at every stage. For research administrators
panel presentation “Best Practices on Managing Funding Opportunities” will provide you with many new and successful strategies. For those tasked with motivating faculty and expanding your research enterprise, you will find the sessions “Encouraging a Research-Active Faculty” and “Quality over Quantity: Developing, Incentivizing, and Showcasing Good Works” to be very valuable and full of proven ideas. Lastly, be sure to attend “Working in Perfect Harmony: Sponsored Programs Offices and Development Offices” to help overcome common obstacles in working with our fundraising colleagues.

Federal Track
The Federal track will bring you the latest from Washington, DC. We have agency updates by NSF, NIH, and ARPA-E officials, the latest news on public access, insights from the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR), and Gil Tran will enlighten and entertain us with “same/same but different” news on the Uniform Guidance. We are especially excited that Sally Rockey will brief attendees on her new role at the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR) in a combined session with USDA. To augment the information from the federal representatives, we have planned follow on discussion groups to allow institutions to share strategies for complying with public access requirements and the special challenges faced by predominantly undergraduate institutions in implementing the Uniform Guidance.

As you can see, the 10th Annual PRA Conference is shaping up to be an outstanding meeting with offerings for everyone in a city no one can resist – New Orleans! So, register early for your opportunity to learn something new, enjoy great food, and connect with friends – new and old. You are sure to return from the conference recharged, re-energized, and ready to take on Change, Challenge, and Opportunity.

Yours in Building for the Future,
Robyn and Laurianne


Among the overarching recommendations, the report suggests that the “regulatory regime” governing federally funded academic research should be critically reexamined and recalibrated. Specific to congressional action, the report recommends addressing a lack of uniformity in regulations, policies, forms and requirements; a risk stratified system of human subject protections; single IRB for multisite studies (with a standard set of policies and procedures and “a nationally uniform work-flow-based informatics infrastructure”); a unified approach to the care and use of research animals; several recommendations related to inspector generals (e.g., audit cost versus recovered costs, reexamining the methodology for identifying institutions for audit and reporting only audit resolution findings); and that OMB affirm that institutions may take advantage of the flexibility provided in the Uniform Guidance in documenting personnel expenses. The report includes favorable recommendations specific to OMB related to subrecipient monitoring, the DS-2 and procurement and to federal agencies (e.g., greater use of just-in-time; a central repository for assurances and streamlining reporting).

Recommendations specific to research institutions include reviewing for excessive or unnecessary institutional policy created in response to federal regulations, and that universities foster a culture of integrity among academic leaders, faculty, post-docs, students, staff and administrators and “mete out appropriate sanctions” when behavior deviates from ethical and professional norms. The committee also recommends the creation of “a new mechanism, to include an active public-private forum and a designated official within government, to foster a more effective conception, development and harmonization of research policies”. The committee recommends that Congress create a self-funded, government-linked Research Policy Board (RPB) composed of 9-12 members from academic research institutions and 6-8 liaisons from federal agencies to serve as the “primary policy forum for discussions relating to the regulation of federally funded research programs in academic research institutions” and an Associate Director, Academic Research Enterprise, within OSTP to serve as a principal contact point for the RPB; oversee the government-academic research partnership; work in partnership with OIRA to manage regulatory burden; and issue an annual report to congress related to the research partnership.

You can read Part 1 of the report here: http://www.nap.edu/read/21803/chapter/1

Lisa Nichols, Ph.D.
Council on Governmental Relations

National Academies Report on Federal Research Regulations and Reporting Requirements
Do you have your copy of our Uniform Guidance desk reference?

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Working With “Difficult” People:

Stingrays, Sharks, Electric Eels and More

By Nicole G. Hammill

ABSTRACT

Drawing primarily upon the author’s experience as well as on the research of various management gurus and human resources experts, this article describes various types of “difficult” people and provides practical advice on how to work effectively with them. Readers will be offered tools to identify the reasons and motivations behind the “difficult” behavior of others, maintain a professional demeanor and remain focused on common goals in the face of conflict, avoid conceding on important issues for the sake of “harmony”, and employ proven tactics to diffuse tense encounters in the workplace.
**Introduction**

If you’re anything like me, you’ve spent more than a few days—probably around the time of NIH deadlines—wishing for a workplace where you could hide away in a luxurious office, occasionally peering out your picture window, emerging only on your own terms to collaborate with cooperative, intelligent, pleasant colleagues whose goals and objectives dovetail perfectly with yours.

Instead, you find yourself swimming in an ocean of conflict, surrounded on all sides by a school of sea creatures whose mission, it seems, is to drown your enthusiasm. You’re on the SS Minnow, and your co-workers are the waves upon which your tiny ship is being tossed.

I’m here to serve as your life preserver. I’ll help you recognize the most common types of “difficult” people we encounter, and identify the reasons and motivations behind their behavior. Then, I’ll help you learn how to maintain a professional demeanor and remain focused on common goals in the face of conflict, avoid conceding on important issues for the sake of “harmony”, and employ proven tactics to defuse tense encounters.

Hold on to your buoy. Dry land is just ahead.

---

**The Little Water Nymph:** “Passive/Lazy”

Have you met The Little Water Nymph? She’s the one over there on the clamshell, filing her nails. She takes two-hour lunch breaks, makes dozens of personal calls, naps in her desk chair, frequents the restroom, and surfs the web all day.

Her reasons and motivations for behaving this way include the fear of failure (if she doesn’t try, she won’t fail!) and the inability to concentrate (for any number of reasons). She may not understand the standards/performance expectations, or perhaps she’s simply quite beautiful and has relied exclusively on her looks her entire professional life. I’m trying to pity her. Really, I am.

You can remain focused and professional when dealing with your Little Water Nymph by tuning her out and focusing on your own work, releasing the concept that life must be fair, and remembering that she is not a role model.

Avoid conceding on important issues by being clear about goals, deadlines and commitments and not letting her work become your responsibility.

It’s unlikely that you’ll engage in a truly tense encounter with the Little Water Nymph; she’s not invested enough to put up much of an argument. If you do find the need to defuse things, I recommend approaching her with a plan to help her organize her work. Communicate the problem to your superior without tattling—by making it your issue, not hers: “I’m sorry for the typos in your research strategy, Dr. Healer; I was so busy assembling all the other pieces of your application that I forgot to remind Water Nymph that proofreading was her responsibility”. It’s also helpful, if not always possible, if you can agree avoiding to work collaboratively on a project with deadlines (Uhl, 2007).

**Remo:** “Negative”

Just behind that batch of coral swims Remo, who doesn’t believe that anything will work and is not interested in anything new and/or improved.

He’s often ill-tempered, full of resentment, and stubborn, and isn’t open to suggestions from others. He’s just not open, period.

Remo is motivated by the fear of being disrespected or not loved by others, and by the fear that “bad things” are going to happen (Uhl, 2007).

It’s easy to get sucked into Remo’s eddy of negativity, but instead, consider pursuing your own dreams, taking healthy risks, and trusting others. You might just be the inspiration Remo is seeking!

Avoid conceding on important issues by refusing to participate in Remo’s festival of naysaying. Simply change the subject. It’s particularly important to never share negative information with Remo; it’s the “bottom” upon which he feeds (Uhl, 2007).

If things get tense with Remo, smile and remain detached. Try to break into Remo’s headspace by asking him to tell you something—anything—positive. If you must, politely leave the room and end the conversation.

**Flapper:** “Supercilious”

Holding court on that iceberg up ahead is Flapper, who signs all his correspondence “Principal Dolphin”. Flapper knows it all, has seen it all, and has done it all. He’s an aloof, self-satisfied, emotionally flat, perpetually constipated mammal.

Flapper may be an older worker who feels friendly engagement is inappropriate in the workplace. He might have underlying insecurities, resulting in his social discomfort becoming your social discomfort (Uhl, 2007).

Do your best to accept the information you receive from Flapper while minimizing the irritation that the messenger is causing you; recognize that instruction isn’t criticism. Be sure to acknowledge his intelligence, experience, and capabilities before dismissing his suggestions. Thank Flapper for his input and tell him that next time, when you need his assistance, you’ll be sure to ask for it.

Keep things from getting ugly by asking questions, even if you actually mean to make a suggestion. You might ask, for example: “Flap, holding a training session on the key points of the new Uniform Guidance makes a lot more sense than just posting a link to 2 CFR 200, doesn’t it?” Use phrases such as, “As I understand it,” “What I’ve learned is,” or “I’ve heard that.” Employ truisms to pre-empt their know-it-all-ism: “Only an idiot would suggest this is the only method, but what’s your opinion?”

**Sir Krabby:** “Greedy/Needy”

Atop the peak of an underwater volcano paces Sir Krabby, nursing his inflated sense of elf-importance and entitlement. He craves attention, requires endless praise, and knows how to belittle you and make you serve him (Uhl, 2007).

It’s clear that Sir Krabby values control and power over love and lacks empathy (McGrath & Edwards, 2000). That’s why it’s important to remain focused and professional by giving specific, and never generic, praise only when it is merited.

If you need to avoid conceding on important issues, frame your request in ways that Sir Krabby can hear—such as showing him how your request will be beneficial to him. Ego stroking and flattery also work.

When your emotions reach a flashpoint with Sir Krabby, it’s best to address his behavior specifically and directly, but never personally (Crowley & Elser, 2006). You might say, “When you hid all the computer files containing base salaries, I wasn’t able to prepare the grant application budget. I can save you a lot of time and ensure your application’s budget appears reasonable if you can use your considerable influence to restore my access to that information.”

**Toby Rick:** “Secretive/Elusive”

Hidden in a large rocky crevasse lurks Toby Rick. Toby never discloses anything remotely personal about himself, which wouldn’t be so
bad, except that he also never volunteers information about projects on which he is working, and in meetings, he always sits in a “perimeter chair” instead of at the conference table.

Creatures like Toby may just be natural introverts, but other forces may be at play as well. There may be language or cultural barriers, for example, or perhaps a lack of self-confidence (Uhl, 2007). In our business, it’s likely – I daresay probable – that part of Toby’s reticence stems from the fact that he is so gifted intellectually as to have few peers. It’s lonely at the top of the intellectual crest.

Remember that ultimately, Toby’s personal life is his and only his business (Crowley & Elster, 2006). I’m confident that you can find a way to communicate with him that works for both of you, such as emailing instead of face-to-face, or speaking one-on-one instead of in a group setting.

Once a preferred method of communication is established, insist on acquiring the work-related information you must have. If Toby continues to stonewall, try deducing where Toby’s “primary source” is, and going to that source to get what you need.

Whatever you do, avoid suggestions that Toby change his methods or personality. Most importantly, take Toby’s “secrets” with you to the grave. Consider this: betraying the confidence of someone you’ve drawn out is so devastating that it’s served as a pivotal plot point in pretty much every ugly-duckling-to-prom-queen film since Carrie.

The Mandible: “Aggressive”

Careful! Don’t tip your toe in the water. That ominous music you hear means The Mandible is speeding by.

The Mandible deals with conflict and obstacles by attacking, humiliating, or criticizing. He can be demanding and loud, a poor listener who interrupts frequently. Unfortunately, he’s often tolerated in the workplace because he tends to be productive and gets things done (McGrath & Edwards, 2000).

Most of the time, The Mandible feels inadequate. Some of the time, he’s also in a lot of emotional pain (McGrath & Edwards, 2000). Think of the last time you accidentally hit your head with the trunk of your car. Come on…you know you’ve done that. Remember how enraged that pain made you feel?

With The Mandible, your best option is to let go of your reactivity (Crowley & Elster, 2006). That’s easier said than done, but start by taking a few short breaths to relax your body. Then count to 10. Then pause before you speak. If nothing else, all that breathing and pausing will short-circuit The Mandible’s tirade.

Avoid conceding on important issues by acknowledging The Mandible’s position, and then politely saying that you have a slightly different approach you’d like to share. Request a small, doable change that can meet your need and allow The Mandible to save face, making sure to clarify how it will benefit your relationship and the project. It never hurts to empathize, too: “It must be incredibly frustrating to realize that the cost accounting manager miscalculated the figures for our R&A rate agreement; may I distract you from that by asking for your signature on this cost transfer form?”

The Cranken: “Temperamental/Violent”

Finally, we turn our attention to the serious matter of The Cranken, who’s just below the surface of the water and could erupt violently. He (or she) could be recognized by such traits as:

- Signs or talk of extreme stress;
- Significant mood swings;
- Personality changes;
- Feeling of being victimized by supervisors or the entire organization;
- Paranoia;
- Depression;
- Behavior inappropriate to the situation at hand, especially unwarranted anger;
- Signs of alcohol or drug abuse;
- Carrying of a concealed weapon;
- Involvement in a troubled romantic relationship within the workplace, particularly if it is unreciprocated and obsessive;
- Inability to take criticism;
- Expressions of hopelessness;
- Desperation about financial or personal problems;
- Productivity or attendance problems;
- Sabotage of projects;
- Identification with people who use violence:
- Behavior inappropriate to the situation at hand, especially unwarranted anger;
- Signs of alcohol or drug abuse;
- Carrying of a concealed weapon;
- Involvement in a troubled romantic relationship within the workplace, particularly if it is unreciprocated and obsessive;
- Inability to take criticism;
- Expressions of hopelessness;
- Desperation about financial or personal problems;
- Productivity or attendance problems;
- Sabotage of projects;
- Identification with people who use violence;
- Threats of violence;
- Any violent behavior in the workplace, toward people or inanimate objects (Smallwood, 2009).

The Cranken’s attitudes and behavior may be caused or influenced by medication, a history of violent victimization, or even mental illness. Because of the potential danger, it’s recommended that you ensure that conversations with The Cranken take place from a position of physical safety. Have other people present to witness any encounters. Moreover, it’s important to observe, respect, and avoid The Cranken’s emotional triggers (Uhl, 2007).

Keep a paper trail of The Cranken’s inappropriate behavior, both to prove the issue is real and for legal protection. If you must engage The Cranken, discuss behaviors and performance only, rather than attitude.

Do not attempt to engage in a “tense encounter” with a potentially violent colleague; instead, contact your H/R department and/or law enforcement.

Conclusion

“Hell is other people,” Jean-Paul Sartre so famously noted in his play No Exit (Sartre, 1944). Perhaps, but given the collaborative nature of research administration, working with “difficult” people is unavoidable. Keep in mind that, as complex land mammals, we’re all difficult from time to time, with elements of Water Nymph, Remo, Flapper, Sir Krabby, Toby Rick, The Mandible, and even The Cranken inside each of us. There’s no need to abandon ship. The key is to reach into your wheelhouse, pull out the tools I’ve provided to you, and batter down the hatches. Smooth sailing, my friends!

References


Nicole G. Hammill is a “Flapper”. She has worked for fifteen years in research administration at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center – New Orleans. A recipient of a Bureau of Government Research “Excellence in Government” Award, Mrs. Hammill was recently named LSUHSC’s Department of Physiology “Appreciated Employee of the Year”. She can be reached at nharro@lsuhsc.edu
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Greetings Region I,
Happy holidays! It feels weird to be writing this since Halloween is still 2 weeks away. In looking back at the Region’s accomplishments of the past 12 months, I am happy to report that it has been a very successful year for us. We continued our traditions of putting together a fantastic spring meeting (Portland, Maine was amazing); providing wonderfully educational RADGs and Workshops; we continued to offer the Mentor and the Executive Shadow Programs; and we saw positive results from our Executive Shadow Program with two alumni being elected to officer positions. We also changed things up a bit by offering our first RADG outside of Boston (which was a rousing success); we held our first networking event allowing colleagues to get to know each other in a relaxed environment and to connect with institutions looking to fill open positions; we made sure that the Advisory Board had representation from all states in Region I; we had 13 candidates, with representation from every state, for our annual election; and we updated the By-Laws to create a Financial Management Committee and a role for the immediate past Treasurer on this committee to provide better continuity and management of the Region’s finances (which you will all be voting on soon if you have not already). I am extremely happy and honored to have had the opportunity to work with the many talented individuals behind all of these successes, thank you!

Congratulations to the incoming 2016 elected officers: Jill Mortali, Chair-Elect; David Barnett, Treasurer-Elect; Elizabeth Haney, Secretary Elect; and Susan Zipkin, National Board Member!

As space is limited for this month I’ll give one more plug for our Budgeting with Excel workshop, our last educational program for the year, register early to secure a spot. We also have our Holiday party this month, keep an eye out for the announcement, I hope you’ll be able to join us!

Michelle Auerbach serves as Chair of Region I and is the Executive Director of Research Integrity and Assurance at Boston University. Michelle can be reached at chair@ncuraregioni.org

REGION I
New England
www.ncuraregioni.org
https://www.facebook.com/ncuraregioni

REGION II
Mid-Atlantic
www.ncuraregionii.org
https://www.facebook.com/groups/ncuraregionii

Time flies when you are having fun - I can’t believe my term as Chair is almost over! What a great year for Region II! Our busy year included an informative and fun Spring Meeting in Baltimore (despite some local unrest), many successful PDC workshops, a new Region II Logo, new members, revised Administrative Policies, and a fabulous performance of songs from Grease at AM57.

Next year we are looking forward to our Spring Meeting in Philadelphia, PA, a new fresh look for our website, a slogan contest, and more! I hope to see more of our members get involved in the many different volunteer positions within the Region.

Spring Meeting Updates
May 1 – May 4, 2016
Philadelphia, PA
Have a session you would like to see at the Philadelphia meeting or want to share your knowledge as a presenter? Please visit the following link to suggest a session: http://www.empliant.com/survey/F9DEB7259-A939-9293-C972/

Professional Development Committee Update
Visit the PDC section of the Region II website (http://ncuraregionii.org/pdc) for a current listing of PDC workshops near you! Want a workshop to come to your area or interested in hosting a workshop at your institution? Contact the PDC Chair, Greg Slack gslack@clarkson.edu. Don’t forget - institutions hosting a workshop receive either two free workshop registrations or one free Region II Spring Meeting registration!

Don’t forget to follow us on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ncuraregionii/ and Twitter: @NCURAREGIONII

Jill A. Frankenfield serves as the Chair of Region II and is an Assistant Director in the Office of Research Administration at the University of Maryland, College Park.
The days are getting shorter signifying that the end of 2015 is nearing and Region III is proud to share with you a review of a productive and prosperous year for research administration in the southeast. Our regional membership has increased; we now have over 1600 members! Coming together over phone calls, emails, meetings, and conferences, our members and leaders have had an extremely busy year!

The Executive Committee, regional standing committees, and other volunteers brought the benefits of NCURA membership to life by providing opportunities for members to learn, share, and network on both the regional and national level. We would be remiss not to thank the nearly 150 volunteers for their continuous efforts. Thank you all for being a part of our successful 2015!!! In anticipation of an even greater year to come, we want every Region III member to know there are many ways to get involved. If you are interested in lending your time and talent to our region, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Sandy Barber, at sandra.barber@business.gatech.edu to find out how you can get involved.

We are busy planning the 2016 Regional Meeting and are expecting an amazing turn-out at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf & Spa Resort, for which registration will open in January. The program will also be available in January; in the meantime, we’d like to thank those who responded to our Call for Proposals. Another thanks goes to the Program Committee for their tireless commitment to bringing us the best in workshops, concurrent sessions, and discussion groups. We hope to see you in Miramar Beach, Florida April 29-May 4, 2016!

We’d also like to thank David Smelser from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville for his dedication and hard work as Secretary in 2014 and 2015. During his tenure as Secretary, David made many significant contributions to Region III including launching of the new Region III website, increasing Region III’s social media presence, and implementing a monthly Region III newsletter, as well as many other benefits to the Region too numerous to list. His influence will be felt for years to come.

The Executive Committee will be welcoming two new officers on January 1, 2016 Deborah Smith from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center as Secretary and Robert Bingham-Roy from Georgia Tech and Director of USG Sponsored Programs as Treasurer-Elect.

Stay in touch with Region III and keep informed about what is happening in the region by visiting our website at www.ncuraregioniii.com signing up for the monthly newsletters, and following us on social media (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter). You don’t want to miss out on all the things that are happening in 2016!

Tanya Blackwell serves as the Public Relations Coordinator for Region III and is a Contracting Officer at the Georgia Institute of Technology/GTRC.

Happy holidays to everyone! Beyond being a great time of year to celebrate with family and friends, this is usually the time research administration slows down at our institutions. I hope you are all are taking advantage of a little peace and quiet around the office and catching up.

If things are slowing down for you, how about thinking about your NCURA colleagues who have been influential in your career so far. Region IV has a robust awards program; just take a peek at the website. In the new year we will send out a request for nominations, and we’d love to see many nominations come in to recognize the great work going on in our region. Now is the time to get those nominations ready.

The region IV board recently met for our annual fall meeting and finalized some new communication strategies you’ll see rolling out in the near future. Our strategy is to communicate more effectively with less emails. Over the next year, you’ll start to see monthly emails summarizing our news and targeted, brief social media updates. We now have a Twitter account! Please follow NCURA Region IV @NCURAIV! We also have a Facebook page. If we aren’t Facebook friends yet, we should be! Please search for “Ncura Region IV” and like us! We will be posting quick reminders, updates, and fun facts on both accounts!

The board also had a chance to check out the location for the spring meeting in Kansas City, May 1-4. Wow, this meeting will be fantastic - workshops and networking events galore! Kansas City is a walkable city, with lots going on downtown. Late spring is the perfect time to visit, and take in the city. Registration will open in February, along with lots of volunteer opportunities. Keep your eye out for these updates. I’ve met many friends volunteering through NCURA, and we’d love to have all of you on board to participate.

Cheers and Happy New Year to ALL. See you in 2016! Kirsten

Kirsten Yehl serves as the Chair of Region IV and is Administrative Director of Institute for Public Health and Medicine at Northwestern University.

December 2015
Save the Dates: April 24-27, 2016
Grapevine, Texas - Research Administration: Innovating Today and Defining Tomorrow
Region V is heading to the Dallas/ Fort Worth Metroplex as Grapevine, TX and the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center plays host to the 2016 Annual Regional Meeting. The program committee has set the theme and is excited in moving forward with the conference planning. We have sent out the call for proposals and will be posting volunteer opportunities in the near future.

Our Keynote Speaker will be Dr. Benjamin Levine, M.D., Distinguished Professor in Exercise Sciences, U.T. Southwestern Medical Center. Dr. Levine is a renowned sports cardiologist who will be using NASA-honed technology to monitor swimmer Den Lecomte as he sets his goal to be the first person to swim across the Pacific Ocean. A special thanks to program committee member Angela Wishon for securing what looks to be an exciting presentation.

I would like to see member participation grow in the future, and it starts with getting involved. As we move into the new year, not only are the opportunities to volunteer for the meeting and committees, but we will be seeking candidates to fill several officer positions in the April election.

If you have suggestions or questions regarding the Annual Meeting, please feel free to contact any of the committee members: Shelly Berry-Hebb (sberry@tamu.edu), Amanda Reitmayer (areitmayer@tamu.edu), Becky Castillo (bcastillo@mdanderson.org), Gina Concannon (gina.concannon@tamucc.edu), Teresa Hui (Teresa.hui@utsouthwestern.edu), Justin Marmolejo (Justin.marmolejo@utsa.edu), Roxanne Smith Parks (rparks1@lamar.edu), Tonya Pinkerton (tonya.pinkerton@ttu.edu), Robyn Remotigue (robyn.remotigue@untdsc.edu), or Angela Wishon (angela.wishon@utsouthwestern.edu).

I look forward to seeing you all next April!

Katherine Kissmann serves as Chair of Region V and is Director, Contracts and Grants at The Texas A&M University System Research Services. She can be reached at kkissmann@tamus.edu

Dear Fellow RVI Members:
Those new to the research administration profession soon learn that our compliance and management landscape is continuously changing. Thus, to be leaders of change or to “just survive,” we soon understand the value of the education, leadership and connections gained through our NCURA membership. I have enjoyed my membership over the years, and I truly appreciate the connections gained over the past year serving as the RVI Chair. There is a rich abundance of desire to learn, share, and lead that enriches our experiences that shares the spirit of the quote of former president John F. Kennedy, “Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” I thank you, fellow members, for your desire to learn, share, lead, and for making this past year, and my journey as Chair, unforgettable.

I thank the region officers, committee members, and volunteers of both Region VI and Region VII for helping make our Salt Lake City meeting a success.

Life Elevated: reaching new heights through research administration…

There were many great highlights at the conference, including an engaging and relevant presentation by our keynote speaker, Phil Gwoke, a generational expert from the firm Bridgeworks. We were joined via web connection to include sessions from NIH and NSF, and we had presentations and discussion groups, including a hands-on session on the Magic of Conflict, which got participants out of their seats and interacting through thoughtful motion.

Please visit us on Facebook at: NCURA Region VI
https://www.facebook.com/groups/729496637179768/?fref=nf

At the SLC meeting, we also honored and our congratulated the following distinguished awardees:

Linda L. Patton Emeritus Award:
Linda L. Patton, Emeritus, California State University, Fullerton

Helen Carrier Distinguished Service Award:
Bruce Morgan, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research Administration, University of California, Irvine

(L-R): Rosemary Madnick, Linda Patton, Derrick Jones
Meritorious Contribution Award:
Derick Jones, Program Manager, Pediatrics Division of Genetic Outcomes and Medical Genetics. The Institute for Translational Genomics and Population Sciences G.A.M.E. (Genetic and Molecular Epidemiology Institute), Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center

A special thanks to Stella Sung, University of California, San Diego and the awards committee.

2016 Region Meeting: October 2-5, 2016 — Save the date! The planning is well underway for our 2016 Region VI/VII/VIII Meeting in Maui, Hawaii. Look for upcoming information about the meeting and for opportunities to get involved as a volunteer.

Acknowledgements:
Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers for supporting the region activities over the last year, including special thanks to our members serving on our region committees, the Program Committee, session presenters, and the many volunteers at the registration desk, the room monitors and all the helping hands needed to plan region meetings and activities.

I would also like to acknowledge the dedicated and diligent support of Matthew Kirk, Sam Aleshire, Derick Jones, Lisa Jordan, Marjorie Townsend, and Sandra Logue who all significantly contributed to the region activities this year. Thank you.

It has been a pleasure serving the Western Region as the Region VI Chair. Thank you for a great year!

Melissa Mullen serves as Region VI Chair and is the Director of Sponsored Programs at the California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo. She can be reached at mrmullen@calpoly.edu

Beth Seaton’s Journey

I began my career in research administration at Texas A&M, as many of us have, by accident. I then took a job at Western Illinois University where I attended my first NCURA national meeting in 1989. There I met my first NCURA champion, Steve Hansen. Steve introduced me around, encouraged me, and soon invited me to do a presentation at a regional meeting.

I worked the regional registration desk, hosted roundtables, co-presented concurrent sessions regionally and then nationally, worked my way up to doing workshops and eventually I became traveling faculty, teaching Fundamentals around the country (what fun). I am currently finishing up my two year position on the Board of Directors. NCURA has given me opportunities I never thought possible when I first started out in this field. Most importantly it has given me life long friends who actually understand what I do for a living.
I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. – Maya Angelou

I often think of this quote when I am working with my faculty. Preparing proposals for submission is never an easy task regardless if you are the faculty or the research administrator. There is always stress involved when dealing with deadlines. My goal during this time is to imprint a positive sentiment on everyone involved, and have incorporated this into our service model. As a result, our office is viewed with confidence, and faculty knows they can come to us regardless of the size of the task.

On October 4th-7th we held our joint Regional Meeting in Salt Lake City. The meeting was a huge success! I wanted to give a wholehearted thank you to everyone who worked diligently on organizing the program and meeting. Our keynote speaker was fantastic! It is always a great time meeting and chatting with attendees from both regions. Many of our colleagues expressed how they learned new things, networked, and of course had fun. The Tuesday night festivities were very popular and the photo booth was a hit. I am also pleased to announce Catherine Douras from Colorado State University as our travel awardee. Thank you Sandra Logue, Natalie Buys, and Garrett Steed for your steadfast efforts on the travel award committee.

The results are in and I am very pleased to announce our newly elected 2016 officers.

Sandra Logue: Chair-Elect
Lee Petit: Secretary/Treasurer
Tolise Cordelia Miles: Member-at-Large

I am constantly amazed by our members and the wealth of knowledge they have. Our region is doing so well because of you. I am truly honored to be a part of the leadership for Region VII.

Save the date! We are already starting to plan our next joint regional meeting. Come join us and say “Aloha” to beautiful Maui on October 2-5, 2016. Instead of our usual RVI and RVII meeting, I am happy to announce Region VIII will also be joining us. This will be a meeting to remember! Calls for proposals will be coming out soon.

Don’t forget to like us on Facebook! Our Region VII Facebook site is up and running at https://www.facebook.com/groups/NCURARegionVII/?pnref=lhc Please join us! As you know, social media is the quickest way to interact and receive information. Check it out and see posts from our joint regional meeting.

Please make sure you visit our webpage often for upcoming announcements.

Marj Townsend serves as Region VII Chair and is the Research Advancement Manager for the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University.

In September, the international region sponsored its first ever stand-alone workshop. We decided that Zurich in Switzerland would be a fitting place for the “Global Sponsored Research Administration workshop”. ETH Zurich was kind enough to host the workshop which provided a central location for research administrators across Europe. The goal of the workshop was to increase knowledge for research administrators on US-funded grants in a European setting. The workshop provided an in-depth look at financial compliance issues through a combination of lecture, case studies, review of audit reports, and a discussion of best practices. The workshop was incredibly successful and made possible by the expertise of Vivian Holmes (Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard) and Kim Moreland (University of Wisconsin-Madison). Big thanks to Agatha Keller and Annika Glauner for their vision and time to produce such a successful workshop.

Lots of members from the international region marked the 25th September in their calendars and celebrated the inaugural Research Administrators Day with pride! One example of this is from the University of Melbourne in Australia (photo below), they went all out and held a big team celebration to thank all the research administrators for all the great work they do as research administrators!

In other international region news, we can now announce the exciting news that we will be joining regions VI, VII for our regional meeting in 2016. The meeting will be held on 2-5 October, 2016 in Hawaii – make sure you save the date!

Don’t forget that there are plenty of volunteer opportunities if you would like to be involved in the international region – have a look at the website for more information. www.ncuraintlregion.org
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Joyce H. Ferland, MBA, is now the Administrative Director, Research Radiology at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Elizabeth Haney, formerly a Senior Research Officer at the Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering at Harvard University, is now an Associate Director in the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs at Middlebury College. Liz will utilize her experience in research administration and her graduate degrees in science and management to serve as the primary liaison to the natural sciences at Middlebury, supporting all aspects of the development of institutional and faculty proposals for funding to advance the mission of the College.

Oregon State University reorganized its pre- and post-award offices into a new Office for Sponsored Research and Award Administration. This office will provide the full “lifecycle” of research administration by supporting proposal submission, award negotiation and acceptance, award management and closeout of awards. In addition, this office will serve as the primary point of contact for external audits. Patricia Hawk leads this new office as the Assistant Vice President. Pat has served as NCURA’s President, co-developed both the Financial Research Administration and Departmental Research Administration travelling workshops, and also serves as a Global Travelling Workshop faculty member.

Toni Lawson, Director, Office of Research Administration, University of Maryland, College Park, (UMCP) will retire on January 1, 2016. Toni’s career in research administration spans more than 30 years, beginning when she was a research administrator at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. In 1987, Toni joined UMCP as a contract administrator and continued her professional growth with increasing levels of responsibility. Toni has served in many capacities at the national and regional levels within NCURA. As an NCURA volunteer, Toni has served as workshop faculty, presenter, a member of the Professional Development Committee, traveling workshop faculty, Board Member, and participated on numerous program committees. Toni was also a recipient of the 2014 Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award. In her retirement, Toni plans to travel and volunteer in her Baltimore community.

P. Maureen ‘Mo’ Valentine, MPA, formerly Director of Research Support Services at University of Memphis is now the Assistant Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs at Ohio University.

Have a milestone to share? Email schiffman@ncura.edu
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Manage vs. Coach: Knowing and understanding the difference. More... http://www.forbes.com/forbes/welcome
Carbon-Fiber-Reinforced Lightweight Car Door to be Developed at Clemson University

By Stephen Moore

A team led by Clemson University will soon begin a $5.81 million research project aimed at developing an ultra-lightweight door that is expected to assist automakers in their race to meet federal fuel economy standards.

Researchers will use carbon-fiber-reinforced thermoplastic composites to fabricate a driver’s side front-door assembly for a major original equipment manufacturer (OEM). The technology could also be used to create other parts of the vehicle and hit the market by 2022, the researchers said.

Srikanth Pilla in his lab at Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research.

The goal is to reduce the door’s weight by 42.5 percent. Every ounce counts as automakers work to meet U.S. corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards. Fleets of vehicles are supposed to average 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025.

A cross-disciplinary team of faculty members from Clemson’s mechanical engineering and automotive engineering departments have come together for the research. Srikanth Pilla, an assistant professor of automotive engineering, is the principal investigator on the project. The co-principal investigators are Melur “Ram” Ramasubramanian, D. W. Reynolds Distinguished Professor of Mechanical Engineering and department chair; Paul Venhovens, the BMW Endowed Chair in Automotive Systems Integration; and Gang Li, an associate professor of mechanical engineering.

Pilla said that as the team makes the door lighter, researchers would expect it to cost more because they are using more advanced materials. Researchers are mandated to keep the cost increase down to $5 for every pound of weight saved, but they expect the technologies they develop will ensure they can reach their targets.

"Of course, as we hit these weight and cost targets, we’re going to be careful to not compromise on functional or safety requirements," Pilla said. "It’s possible we could exceed those requirements, even as we make the door lighter. We’re going to do this in collaboration with the University of Delaware and industry."

Several public and private sources are providing funding for the research. The largest portion comes from the U.S. Department of Energy, which has announced it is contributing $2.25 million. Private industry contributed the rest.

Industrial collaborators include the businesses that would form the supply chain involved in manufacturing the composite doors that university researchers will develop, Pilla said.

"This project is particularly exciting because we have a commercialization plan," Pilla said. "Our OEM partner has clearly expressed a strong interest to take full or partial technologies and put them into vehicles that will come in 2022 and beyond."

Ramasubramanian said that having the majority of funding come from outside the federal government is a major success. "This is the new model of funding by the federal government, where academia, industry and the federal government work as partners and share the benefits," he said. "Everyone has skin in the game. For us to be successful in this at the lead is extremely significant. This sets the stage for future partnerships in composites technology."

Major participants in the research include the automotive engineering department at the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR), the Clemson mechanical engineering department, the University of Delaware Center for Composite Materials and more than 10 private industry partners, including material suppliers, machine builders, toolmakers and software developers.

While researchers are using the door as a model to investigate weight targets, the proposed technologies could also be applied to fabricate most of vehicle’s structural, semi-structural and interior components, they said.

Researchers said the door would meet or exceed standards governing fit, function, safety, stiffness, crash performance, noise, vibration and harshness. The assembly would be recyclable when the vehicle hits the end of its life on the road, they said. Researchers have proposed two designs for the door assembly and plan to pick one after six months of investigation.

The original story can be found here: http://www.plasticstoday.com/articles/carbon-fiber-reinforced-lightweight-car-door-be-developed-clemson-university-20151019a

If you want to share a “cool” project idea, please email Kellie Klein at kellie.klein@wsu.edu
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