Professional Development for Research Administrators

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Overview

• Historical Perspectives of Research Administration
• Basic Functions of the Research Administrator
• Staffing Offices of Sponsored Programs/Grants Offices
• Research Administration as a Profession
• Training Challenges
• Obtaining and Maintaining a Certification in Research Administration
Profiles of Research Administrators – A Historical Perspective

1st Wave
- 1940s
  - Primarily Scientists

2nd Wave
- 1950s
  - Scientists, Military Officers, Business Managers

3rd Wave
- 1960s to Early 1970s
  - RAs Trained at State Colleges and Universities

4th Wave
- 1970s and After
  - Specialized Training in Research Administration
Three Basic Functions of a Research Administrator

An Interpreter, Mediator, and Expeditor
Three Basic Functions of Research Administrators (*cont.*)

- Provide services to enhance researcher success,
- Provide management support for the institution’s research mission, and
- Help sponsors to achieve their goals and abide by their regulations.
Traditional Research Administrator’s Role

Includes diverse tasks:

• Understands nature of the PI’s research
• Assists PIs with funding opportunity information
• Promotes positive relationships between PIs and research sponsors
• Helps PIs apply for grants/contracts (e.g., assist with budgets, forms, deadlines, approvals, and signatures)
• Records and reports on related institutional information
• Ensures that research proposals comply with institutional policies and sponsor requirements
• Assists PIs with financial and management aspects of awards
Staff Recruitment for OSPs and Grant Offices

Qualities/Skills Needed for Success

• Interpreting information: The ability to find meaning in textual and/or numeric data
• Communication
  – With the PI
  – With other research administrators (i.e., for problem solving and problem prevention)
  – With the public
• Problem Solving
• Honesty, integrity, ethics
Research Administration as a Profession

• Defining the Profession
  – Group of individuals with specialized knowledge
  – Education and training at a high level
  – Exercise of specialized knowledge and skills in interest of others

• Professional Development Issues
  – Availability of acceptable education and certification programs
  – Recognized/accredited advanced degree programs
  – Institutionalization of professional standards/required competencies
Training Challenges for Research Administrators

• Requirement for knowledge and skills in diverse areas
• Externally imposed/frequently changing regulations that impact internal process
• Need for engagement in varied experiences to promote growth opportunities for staff
• Institutionalizing professional development as an integral part of the culture of the local organization
Strategies for Training Research Administrators

• On-the-job training/Institution Based Certificate Programs
• Professional Society Certificate Programs
  – Attendance at SRA International and NCURA meetings
  – Research Administrators Certification Council Program
• Online Certificate Programs
  – Management Concepts, etc.
• Online Masters Programs in Research Administration
  – University of Central Florida
  – Emanuel College (Boston, MA)
Fine-tuning Training in Research Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Type</th>
<th>New Hires</th>
<th>Senior Staff/RAs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Training Plan</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Sessions and on-the Job-Training</td>
<td>+</td>
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*SRA and NCURA’s Topical Outline* can help to identify areas for specialized training. Identify areas applicable to the individual’s responsibilities and the organization’s goals.

**Exposure to Leaders in the Field**—Focus on policy and universal issues (*i.e.*, *Collegial problem-solving, human resource issues, strategic planning, forecasting, resource allocation, etc.*)

**Examples of forums for senior staff/RAs:**
- SRA International’s Retreat
- SRA International’s “Old Gray Heads” Roundtable Discussion
What is a Certification in Research Administration?

An endorsement verifying that an individual has:

• Met the Research Administrators Certification Council eligibility requirements; and

• Demonstrated a sufficient level of knowledge for designation as a “professional” sponsored programs administrator.
How Does One Obtain Certification?

To become certified, you must:

• Meet requirements of the Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC) ([http://www.cra-cert.org/](http://www.cra-cert.org/))
  – Degree level obtained
  – Years of experience

• Study the CRA (or CPRA) Body of Knowledge and practice exam—accessible on the RACC web site.
  – Mentors can assist candidates in developing a plan of study

• Pass the CRA exam in one of two available tracks:
  – Certification in Research Administration (CRA) or
  – Certification in Pre-Award Research Administration (CPRA)
What is the Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC)?

• A private, independent, nonprofit organization that develops and administers a voluntary certification program for individuals who meet the requirements established by the Council.

• An organization of volunteer professionals committed to:
  – The continued improvement of the research administration profession, and
  – Facilitating the education and training individuals who wish to become proficient in the field.
Scope of “Bodies of Knowledge”

• The CRA Body of Knowledge covers four areas:
  – Project Development and Administration
  – Legal Requirements and Sponsor Interface
  – Financial Management
  – General Management

• The CPRA Body of Knowledge covers four areas:
  – Research Partnership and Funding
  – Project Development and Proposal Submission
  – Budget Design and Development;
  – Awards and Pre-awards Compliance Considerations
How to Prepare for the Exam?

• Practice the profession and Review Body of Knowledge (BOK) on the RACC website
• Attend Professional Society Meetings (SRA-International or NCURA)
• Network with over 15000 RAs through the RESADM-L Listserv
• Enroll in RACC-sponsored structured review session held in conjunction with SRA International and NCURA meetings, and at other times and places

The most successful CRAs/CPRAs study in groups
Requirements for Recertification

• Every 5 years, CRAs must apply for recertification, which includes a submission of the following:
  – Evidence of continued participation/employment in the field
  – A listing of 80 contact hours of continuing educational activities (i.e., courses/workshops provided or taken)
  – Three questions for future certification examinations

• Every 5 years, CPRAs must sit for and pass an exam, as well as document during each 5-year period:
  – 40 continuing education units (CEUs), or
  – Other equivalent activities (without CEUs)