

CASE STUDY:

Research Administration Training and Compliance at the Department Level for a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution

Beryline Temples
Paula Simons
Timothy N. Atkinson
University of Central Arkansas

ABSTRACT

By providing training from the Central Sponsored Programs Office (SPO), departments, and colleges at Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs) can increase compliance with grant requirements. PUIs usually do not focus on department- or college-level grants administration and lack monetary resources to support this function. However, at the department level grant administration still needs to run smoothly. To meet these responsibilities at PUIs without an official departmental research administrator (DRA), support staff in the departments and/or colleges are sometimes utilized to fill the gaps. It is very important for central administration, DRAs, and support personnel to work together to share the goal of growing the quality and productivity of grants and research activities. The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of grant administration requirements at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), and how best to share this information with DRAs and/or support personnel, as well as other PUIs.

BACKGROUND

At the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), state and federal funding has not kept up with rising expenses over the past few years. The lack of funding has made it necessary for faculty to heighten their search for external sources of money to pay for their research, support student research, and support other special projects. Because most PUIs have a smaller-scaled research infrastructure than is more commonly found at larger research-intensive institutions, the lack of funding has also increased the need for research administrators at all levels to do more with less (Chun, 2010). PUIs like UCA that do not have any or very few departmental research administrators must rely on support staff to take on research administration responsibilities for their department or college.

“Because most PUIs have a smaller-scaled research infrastructure than is more commonly found at larger research-intensive institutions, the lack of funding has increased the need for research administrators at all levels to do more with less”

According to Lintz (2008), we must show all departmental research administrators and support personnel (as well as administrators at the institutional level) that rather than just pushing proposals through, they need to take time to understand the importance of that research. Understanding how research affects the future of science and knowledge allows everyone involved with grant activities to feel more connected and invested with each and every grant. DRAs and/or support personnel are extremely important to their faculty. They are like a hub: they interact with the Principal Investigator (PI), and with the department, college, central SPO, Compliance, Grants Accounting, Human Resources, Purchasing, and many other units. If this support is not available, all of these administrative duties must be handled by the PI, which takes away time otherwise spent on teaching, research, student research development, and other project-related activities. In 2006, Kean published a study sponsored by the Federal Demonstration Partnership in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Kean, 2006). Over 9,000 researchers were surveyed—over 6,000 responded that 42% of their research time was spent on administrative duties. The areas rated as most difficult were “filling out grant progress reports, hiring personnel and managing laboratory finances.” Other tasks listed included personnel evaluations,

following up on Conflicts of Interest and applying for patents.

To increase the level of assistance with administrative duties provided to PIs at the department and college levels, the next hurdle for the central office is to provide the appropriate training for support personnel. These activities often put extra strain on an already burdened central research administration office by disrupting time used to process proposals, grants, and contracts. When there are only a few central office research administrators, this can present a real problem in the short term. However, DRAs/support personnel who have engaged in a training program will lessen the burdens on the central office in the long run.

Increasing regulations, complicated institutional policies, and a lack of funds for assisting faculty with adherence to these regulations and policies take away their energy and enthusiasm for grant development and submission. According to Stanley and McCartney (2009) in a Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) report, *A Profile of Federal-Grant Administrative Burden among Federal Demonstration Partnership Faculty: A Report of the Faculty Standing Committee of the Federal Demonstration Partnership* (Decker et al., 2007), the top administrative burdens for faculty are:

- submitting grant progress reports;
- hiring personnel;
- managing project revenue;

- purchasing equipment and supplies;
- engaging in IRB responsibilities; and
- training and evaluating personnel and students.

A survey by Boyer and Cockriel (1998) of College of Education faculty at the Association of American Universities (AAU) Research I Institutions assessed barriers and motivating factors associated with grants activities. According to this study, the primary barriers were a lack of: training in the grants process, understanding of budgeting, and familiarity with funding sources. These barriers differ from those found in most PUIs, which include faculty not having enough time to carry out the required administrative activities on their grants (Carr, McNicholas, & Miller, 2009).

Of great importance for research administrators, DRAs, and/or support personnel is stretching to understand the researcher's point-of-view on what their needs are, what assists them with their administrative grants activities, and the impact of having these needs met for the researcher (Evans, 2011). Often administrators become confused by the rules, regulations, and compliance issues; rather than allowing them to sort them out themselves, researchers should be offered more positive alternatives. It is also crucial to realize that research and grants activities are one element in faculty activities—not just how many submissions and/or awards

they bring in. This is one area to which research administrators must pay attention when developing the appropriate training for faculty and DRAs/support personnel who will work with faculty at the departmental level. Understanding the makeup of faculty can help research administrators to influence change (Evans, 2011).

“Of great importance for research administrators, DRAs, and/or support personnel is stretching to understand the researcher’s point-of-view regarding what their needs are, what assists them with their administrative grants activities, and the impact the lack of these needs have on the researcher”

No one can predict the coming changes and potential challenges that may face research administration. Most universities are just not geared toward making changes quickly (Tapscott & Williams, 2010). Even though we all experience slow responses to change, it is still the responsibility of the central SPO to keep the university compliant. Therefore, the best scenario for central SPO is to have support personnel in place in departments to help face these new changes and challenges, while minimizing effects on faculty/researchers (Mote, 2011).

“Partnerships and engagement to accelerate innovation is the basis of relationships today...” (Mote, 2011, p. 2). All DRAs/support personnel should be brought and kept up-to-date on all research administration policies and procedures— and this can only be achieved through training, informational meetings, or online programs. Developing these mechanisms will be the first step in creating essential lines of communication, although maintaining this communication will be even more challenging. Training options such as online, in-person sessions, on-demand meetings, self-paced training, or a combination of the above, will offer DRAs/support personnel more convenient training. Each avenue of training should carry some type of completion certification for participants.

“Research is evolving and policies are constantly changing, so there is a never ending need for training” (Robertson & Zipkin, 2011, p. 11). While the demand for more training programs for department research administrators and support personnel will create significant budgetary, facility, personnel, and qualification challenges, it must be noted that the scope of these programs may take longer to put into place without additional support from the university. The return on investment will be significant because the university will retain its strongest research administrators and support personnel by

maintaining a “culture that supports the most ambitious and hard-working team players” (Lampson & Porter, 2011, p. 59).

METHODOLOGY

In order to undertake this study at UCA, after obtaining approval from the UCA IRB Committee the following were developed to obtain qualitative and quantitative data:

- A survey was created and e-mailed to all faculty, support staff, chairs, deans, and other administrators at UCA to determine needs for research administration training for all departmental research administrators and support staff.
- A needs survey was developed for research administrators and e-mailed to the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) PUI listserv and the departmental listserv to obtain information about training programs currently in use.
- A pilot workshop was created and offered that gathered presenters from throughout the UCA campus, including: Central SPO, Central Grants Accounting, Financial Aid, Human Resources, and Purchasing. Another survey was developed and distributed after the workshop and e-mailed to the participants to gauge their experiences.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Prospective Participants

Prior to the Grants 101 workshop (described below), a survey was sent to 63 prospective participants at UCA to gauge the extent of their grants activities, knowledge, and needs. There was approximately a 17% return on the survey. Prospective participants were asked about their expectations for this training program and there was a general consensus that they wanted to better understand and become more informed about grant procedures. Overall, there was a desire to help faculty with all grants needs and activities. The responses also indicated that most support staff already knew how to prepare and process requisitions for purchases, Personnel Action Forms (PAFs) to hire personnel, and travel requisitions. The greatest needs were reported to be an understanding of grant terminology, grant account management, rules and regulations pertaining to allowable costs, the difference between matching and in-kind cost-sharing funds, and, most importantly, the role of support personnel in the grants process.

When asked if they understood the role of Sponsored Programs, 81.8% of support staff replied no, and 72.7% claimed they had never visited the Sponsored Programs website. Problem areas that were most prevalent were grant account management (70%), PAFs on grants (40%), awarding

grants/scholarships to undergraduate students (30%), requesting and paying travel on a grant (30%), requesting and processing purchases on a grant (20%), and paying graduate assistants on a grant (10%). One respondent commented on his continuing struggle to read a budget and multiple accounts created within the larger scope of a primary grant. "Grant Curse" was a common term used in responses when referring to problems in this area.

The need for a formal support personnel training program was apparent from the 90.9% affirmation response from participants. In addition, 100% stated that this training program would benefit support staff, faculty, professional staff, and students involved with grants activities, as well as the university as a whole. When asked if a series of checklists for each specific area would be a useful tool for them and their faculty, 100% replied "yes."

Prospective Presenters

A Pre-Event Survey was sent out to 9 prospective presenters at UCA for the initial training program. The survey response rate was 44%. Prospective presenters listed their expectations for this training program as being to educate support staff about grants, inform administrative assistants about the grants process, come away with a better understanding of the grant process as it relates to funding students, and provide training to UCA staff and faculty that would enable them to comply with

Graduate School requirements for graduate assistants receiving grant funds.

When prospective presenters were asked if their own area of expertise is a necessary component in a successful training program, 100% responded "yes." Also, 100% agreed that the program would benefit participants, faculty, professional staff, students who are involved with grant activities, and the university as a whole. They also agreed that a series of checklists would help improve grants compliance for each specific area—serving as a useful tool for all individuals involved with grants activities. When asked if they believed that the training should be mandatory, 100% stated "yes." Their only comments were a repeated wish for more to participate in the training but did not know how to increase faculty participation.

Faculty and Professional Staff Survey

A Pre-Event Survey was also sent to 474 tenured and tenure-track faculty and full-time professional staff at UCA. Of the 8% who responded to the survey, the most common areas of need and concern were listed as:

- knowledge of programs and ability to find out the requirements so that time is not wasted applying for impossible grants;
- support for administrative details such as purchasing, budget maintenance, reporting requirements to the funding agency;

- facilitation of collaborative opportunities;
- in addition to processing paperwork like PAFs, a need to coordinate with vendors regarding purchase information and follow-up, so things get done in a timely manner;
- assistance with navigating through Sponsored Programs protocols;
- assistance with the arduous process of applying for grants, complying with the funding agency's format, etc.;
- assistance with calculating salaries;
- understanding of deadlines;
- help with budget creation pre-grant and post-grant, budget tracking, purchasing, payroll, and creating annual and final budget reports for funding agencies; and
- keeping faculty abreast of potential funding sources connected with their research interests.

When the faculty were asked what department support personnel should learn at this training program, the answers included those listed above in addition to:

- a more extensive knowledge of budgets and how they work;
- process for proposal development and submission;
- ethics and importance of accuracy;
- P-card use; and
- funding sources that best align with research interests.

Providing information in a streamlined and efficient manner was also a general recommendation from faculty.

Approximately 90.9% stated that they knew what Sponsored Programs does and that they have visited the Sponsored Programs website. The problem areas for these respondents were:

- proposal preparation and submission, tied with grant account management at 46.4%;
- requesting and paying travel on a grant, also tied with PAFs on grants at 42.9%;
- requesting and processing purchases on a grant, 39.3%; and
- other areas of concern such as awarding scholarship funds to undergraduate students, managing graduate assistances on grants, and compliance issues such as IRB or IACUC, 14.3% or less.

One of the most concerning responses from faculty was that year-end purchases and close-outs conflict with the rapid pace of grant funding expenditures, especially for those grants awarded in late May or early June with immediate start dates. Most felt that UCA accounting should acknowledge the problem faculty have making purchases and hiring personnel to get their grants going or keep current grants going during this time and adjust the close-out process accordingly so as to cause as little disruption as possible to their projects.

Most faculty did admit that the process had improved over the past 15 years, but the change had been geologic in pace and not without considerable (unnecessary) complaint from grant awardees. Faculty felt that higher administration should value their initiatives to earn grants a little more and help them by reducing administrative impediments, thereby encouraging more grantsmanship.

In general, 74.2% of the faculty responded that they did not currently have a specific grant-related problem for which they would like help from their support personnel. One other response of concern was: "Need guidance in writing the grant proposal. Our college assigned person is unavailable most of the time due to class schedules and availability times." Following these responses, the faculty were asked if they believe this training program was necessary and if it would benefit the departmental support personnel—90.6% responded yes to both questions. Also, when asked if this program would eventually benefit the faculty as well as other professional staff and students with grants activities, 93.8% said yes, it would. Another response was that this type of training program would benefit the university as a whole. Additionally, 84.4% responded that a series of checklists for each specific area would be a useful tool for them and their departmental support personnel. The only cons listed re the checklists were

that it was just another form in an avalanche of paperwork and that it would be outdated by the time faculty and support staff figured it out. While these checklists were deemed helpful, we believe they may not have a long life.

Faculty and professional staff offered several general comments and suggestions, including those below.

- These workshops more often addressed problems for inexperienced faculty and the inability of staff to deal with grants which cause multiple issues and significantly impede efficiency and impact outcomes.
- These workshops instilled in staff the need for correctly doing their jobs and reminded them of their accountability to the funding agency.
- Faculty wanted to know the content areas of training for the support personnel, what could be expected in terms of help, and what might or might not be asked of the support personnel.
- Sponsored Programs and specifically Grants Accounting needed to engage in a more timely distribution of information as policies and procedures change. Faculty found it frustrating to follow an established procedure only to be told that it had been changed and that they must resubmit everything, which might

have been avoided had they known about the change ahead of time.

- Many participants reported a belief that senior administration should participate in roundtables with grantees to discuss impediments to grantsmanship and useful, practical, and more meaningful forms of encouragement of faculty grant writing than an annual recognition ceremony.
- Several suggested pairing a new grant writer with a partner on all steps in their first grant-writing experience.

Administrators Survey

A Pre-event Survey was emailed to 61 administrators at UCA—16% responded. The administrators stated that their expectations for support staff attending this training re grants activities would be to come away with:

- an understanding of the mechanics of submitting and administering a grant, and managing its budget;
- assistance with interfacing with SPO and with budget management;
- the location and offering of information, and provision of assistance to faculty and students in finding information needed to manage their grants;
- assistance with budget and personnel issues;
- familiarity with the grant process;

- knowledge of the necessary procedures for procurement, travel, contracting, etc.; and
- knowledge of procedures relating to budget management.

The following list from Chairs, Deans and other higher administrative officials highlighted what their support personnel should learn in this training program:

- rules and regulations on reports required by SPO and the budget office;
- rules for managing spending on grants, and the ability to find rules for specific grants when necessary;
- clarification of budget issues, and how to accurately align shadow systems with the university's accounting system (Banner);
- the basics of grant administration in academic departments and their possible role in that process;
- reinforcement for new regulations and procedures; and
- procedures to use in managing grant budgets.

When asked, 87.5% of the administrators knew what Sponsored Programs does and 75% had visited the Sponsored Programs website. The problem areas listed were:

- grants account management, 77.8%;
- requesting and processing purchases on a grant and PAFs on a grant, 33.3% each;

- proposal preparation and submission, graduate assistants on grants, awarding grants and scholarship funds to undergraduate students, and requesting and paying travel on a grant, 22.2% each; and
- human and animal subject issues in research (IRB/IACUC), 11.1%.

Administrators were asked if specific problems should be addressed—44.4% responded “yes.” Those specific items were:

- accurately reporting time and effort;
- purchasing and PAF preparation; and
- budget preparation, including possible items to include that they might not know about (i.e., graduate assistants, supplies, etc.).

The majority of the administrators (87.5%) believed in the necessity of this training program; 87.5% said it would benefit their departmental support personnel; 100% indicated that it would benefit faculty, professional staff, and students involved with grant activities; and 100% said it would benefit the university as a whole. Approximately 88.9% felt that a series of checklists for each specific area would be a useful tool for everyone.

A general comment from the administrators was that faculty should be required to attend similar training to help them understand requirements for their grants.

Training Workshop

Of the 43 UCA support personnel responsible for working with their faculty on grant-related activities who were invited to a three and one-half hour Grants 101 Workshop, twenty-two attended on July 21, 2011. Nine presenters from essential areas involved in grant-related activities across the UCA campus assisted with the workshop. The subject areas covered were:

- Sponsored Programs overview and processes;
- Compliance (IRB & IACUC);
- Grants Accounting;
- Graduate School;
- Human Resources;
- Financial Aid;
- Purchasing; and
- Travel.

The continuity of the grants process from beginning (pre-award) to end (post-award) was outlined for the participants. The representatives from each office involved in the grants process gave a short presentation and answered questions.

Post-Workshop

The day after the Grants 101 Workshop, post-event surveys were emailed to the twenty-two participants and nine presenters. Of the former group, sixteen (73%) responded to the survey. Of the nine presenters, six (67%) responded to the survey. Both categories increased in number of responses by 56% and 23%, respectively, showing that awareness of research

administration training had increased among both participants and presenters with just one workshop.

Of participants who responded, 81.3% said that the training met their expectations. The comments ranged from the information being basic as in previous workshops; to another who said it exceeded expectations, offering brand new information, and enhanced and added to what was already known. These comments show a valid need for beginning and advanced workshops the next time, not only to avoid repeating information to advanced participants, but also to give them a higher level of research administration training. In that way, novice participants can receive the basic introductory version.

When the participants were asked if the session provided the information needed to help faculty with their grants, an overwhelming 87.5% agreed. A common report was that faculty frequently did not even ask for assistance—they just did “their own thing” and then expected the support personnel to handle their mistakes and take the blame for errors. A close second response was that faculty should also be required to attend these types of workshops.

About 75% commented that the workshop helped them in the areas in which they experienced most problems. Among problems listed, budget development on the pre-award side and

budget reconciliation on the post-award side were cited as most difficult.

Approximately 93.8% of the participants agreed that this training program was necessary. In their comments, experienced support personnel said that the “new” staff had a greater need for training. Some newer staff pointed to a definite lack of formal training for new hires. Both groups agreed that a formal program would be beneficial, and that research administration should be an integral part of overall “new hire” training.

Most participants (81.3%) believed this training program helped them. Additional comments included: “no current grant but do foresee one in the near future” and “need to gear this training more toward the newer employees and faculty too.” When asked if the program would eventually benefit the faculty, professional staff, and students involved with grant activities, 81.3% agreed that it would. However, comments highlighted the belief that it would only help if faculty were required to come—not just staff. The general consensus (93.8%) was that the program would benefit the university as a whole. Some of the problems listed were:

- communication on campus drastically needs to be improved;
- this type of training would make a difference;
- the university is woefully lacking in a formal set of trainings;

- most staff have to learn through “trial by fire”—in other words, they had to jump in and learn while asking as many questions as possible; and
- this type of training program should be afforded to everyone who will work with a grant.

Approximately 93.8% believed a series of checklists designed to improve grants compliance for each specific area would be a useful tool for all individuals involved with grants activities. Also, participants thought this training program was of value to them, their department, division, college and the university—81.3% responded “yes.” One participant stated that the training program made sense, enabling staff to make connections with who does what and in what department. When asked how often this training program should be offered, 33.3% said every spring and fall semester, 46.7% said every summer, and 20% said every fall, spring, and summer.

The participants were asked if they thought a training program similar to this one should be required for all faculty and professional staff who submit and receive grant awards and contracts—93.8% agreed but said that the training should be more in depth. Approximately 93.8% responded that a training program like this one should be developed for all administrators (directors, chairs, deans, etc.), especially when involved with:

- approving grant applications;

- approving the award conditions; and
- assuring that all compliance issues have been met.

By another 93.8%, participants believed that this training program was a good experience and had been a positive experience for them. When asked if the training program should be mandatory, 75% agreed. These participants said that it should only be mandatory for new staff and faculty, and then for everyone when rules and relations change. Another view was that before the release of a grant award, a training program geared for that specific grant would be beneficial to all parties involved. In contrast, one participant concluded that: “Not everyone deals with grants. Putting a mandate on the training would cause some to refuse to attend and others to attend with poor attitudes. There is no sense in trying to train someone who does not care.”

Finally, when asked if this training session helped by introducing all personnel who could assist with grant-related questions/problems, 93.8% agreed that it did. Several suggestions from participants are listed below.

- Offering the training 2 or 3 times throughout the year would allow for flexibility with department schedules and busy times.
- This is a good program with lots of helpful information. There is a need to add something regarding the role of

the support staff. We are glad to be included in future communications regarding grant awards and appreciate knowing the closing dates and when we need to have things submitted.

- We need a detailed checklist for the hiring process for GA's being paid by a grant, more information on do's and don'ts, or a checklist of requirements when traveling on a grant.
- This training should be only for new employees.
- This training should be mandatory for everyone submitting, receiving, and working on grants.
- There is a need to address inventory issues for such things as what happens to the supplies left over and the equipment when a grant is over. The handouts are always helpful. It would also be helpful to have the presentations available in electronic files. It was nice to put faces with names; the presenters reassured attendees that it would be okay to call them. A step-by-step checklist would be awesome.
- Faculty and chairs should also attend.
- Please provide more in-depth information, especially more about the actual process of a grant...from beginning to end.

Among presenters, 100% agreed that this training program met their

expectations, that their area of expertise was a necessary component in the program's success, and that the program was necessary and benefited the participants and would eventually benefit faculty, professional staff, students, departments, divisions, colleges, and the university as a whole. Checklists were also an agreed-upon way to help improve grants compliance for each specific area and for all individuals involved with grant activities. The presenters concurred that either they or someone they appointed in their division would work with SPO to develop the checklists. When the presenters were asked about the frequency with which this program should be offered, 18.7% voted for spring semester only, 50% for the spring and fall semesters, and 33.3% for every semester. However, when asked if the program should be mandatory, only 83.3% said yes. But they all agreed that the training program should also be offered to faculty, professional staff, and administrators, and that it was a good experience and had a positive effect on the participants.

In addition to the above surveys and responses, another survey was distributed via email to the National Council of University Research Administrators listserv for the Department Research Administration Neighborhood and the Predominantly Undergraduate Institution (PUI) Neighborhood. Fifty-seven responses

were received. The number of faculty at each institution ranged from 60 to 3,307; support staff in academic departments ranged from 0 to 2,670. Approximately 77.6% of the responses came from PUIs with a central research administration office only and 85.4% from those with no trained research administrators in academic departments. When asked if their staff in departmental offices also served as support for faculty with grants, 69.6% concurred. Formal training programs were available in 20.8% of institutions that provided grant support to faculty, and 79.2% that did not. Types of formal training included joint training in financial/post-award issues, monthly sessions, semi-annual sessions, and, as needed, a more formal program in modules ranging from proposal preparation through contracts/subcontracts, travel/property, accounting, and compliance, in addition to offering monthly advance topics, A-21 and A-110 review, federal contracting, FAR, etc. The benefits of offering mandatory training are listed below.

- Since current training is combined with other university, business, and financial training, its greater range covers more departments than a “research track” alone would do.
- A training program that provides consistent information across research administrators at a university would provide a better understanding of

their role. This type of training allows for more communication between the department RAs and the SPO central personnel and is a good opportunity for the SPO staff to meet department RAs. It is also a good opportunity for SPO staff to develop training and presentation skills. Developing training requires SPO staff to study rules, laws, and regulations related to research administration.

- Mandatory training ensures compliance with effort certification requirements. A working/training luncheon format builds a community across campus and an opportunity for networking.
- Staff members do not have to pay for this training, it is easy to access, and it speaks to the eccentricities of each school.
- This training will increase efficiency, provide consistent training throughout the institution, uniformity, and confidence for administrative personnel. Additionally, it will improve audit reports.
- For staff, the training and additional skills are valuable. In addition, actually being able to see what a faculty member is researching provides a good link between the teacher-scholar models.
- We offer workshops but have very low attendance. We feel that we need

to make these more mandatory or get additional push or support from the Department Chairs and Deans in order to get the participants to attend.

- The workshops can be tailored to specific departments/areas on campus to make them more meaningful. The small size also allows more interaction.
- Training departmental administrators helps us to develop and maintain efficiencies of scale around research and grant administration.
- Training departmental administrators is the only way some PUIs survive. The training decreases audit risks. It helps administrators gain a complete picture of the faculty and how the different salary pieces fit together. It helps establish a network of administrators who can support each other with problem-solving. It provides recognition of their contributions and importance to sponsored programs. It empowers them to succeed in their position.
- With this training, everyone is on the same page, and they know who to contact with questions about specific areas.
- It is all in-house and cost-effective.

The drawbacks of offering mandatory training can be addressed with subsequent reports, below.

- Concerned if this training will only cover post-award issues and combined with other university-related training—that important pre-award issues would be overlooked.
- It takes time out of your day and the SPO staff is very overloaded. However, we see this training as an investment—the more the department RAs know, the better they can do their jobs.
- Voluntary programs do not ensure that all staff receive the information needed to offer a PI/PD effective grant management.
- This training does not go beyond what happens at the university. It would also help to get the perspective of someone from a hospital or research institution.
- There are not enough people in the departmental offices to attend so expectation of task completion is there; however, not all are compliant. Cannot get faculty to attend.
- I'm sure there will be a conflict with time. A lot of the faculty teach online or are at different campuses. I'm not sure when would be the best time to get them all, or at least the ones interested, gathered for training.
- May cause problems having to learn a new skill for an already lean and overworked staff. For the faculty member the problem is being able to

juggle different accounts with different procedures.

- The trainings are static rather than dynamic: they do not address changes that occur throughout the year.
- The training does not always offer a “big picture” or “in-depth” approach.
- Some department administrators are not qualified and unable to oversee research administration duties, even with training.
- The administrators are overwhelmed with all the tasks they are responsible for. This type of training requires departmental commitment to monthly meetings.
- The participation is voluntary, so not everyone attends, and we have trouble getting chairs and deans to attend.
- We have to keep our grant writing sessions generic due to the breadth and depth of research interests. Offering specific sessions on subjects or agencies might not be feasible unless we hired out.

When asked how long it took to develop a formal training program, there were many responses:

- 5 years;
- it has evolved over a number of years with each module approximately 3–4 hours and the materials developed by a team;
- overall, about five years (and still developing);

- on process—roughly 3 months spent to date;
- developed workshops over time;
- a year or so;
- our program has been on-going for 9 years;
- 3–4 years, but is continuously modified as needed; and
- over a couple of years.

Responses about time to program implementation included:

- 2 years;
- however long it took to find a venue for the training and get the word out;
- about 3–6 months from inception;
- still working on it;
- n/a— not yet ready to implement;
- ongoing for 9 years; and
- no time at all— we just started our sessions and tweaked as necessary.

Approximately 53.8% of the research administrators surveyed reported that their support staff or departmental research administrators attended training voluntarily. Only 10.3% supported mandatory training. For PUIs, final suggestions for developing training for support staff or departmental research administrators were offered; these are listed below.

- NCURA could offer basic modules (at no additional cost) for participating PUI institutions. Each module could be later tailored in accordance with each individual PUI policy.

- Be sure to get input from faculty on what their perceived training needs are. Don't make assumptions about what they need.
- There are a lot of resources out there so you do not have to recreate the wheel. Start with NCURA workshop materials and other training materials they offer. Just be persistent.
- Survey the staff and grant faculty to find out what they think they need and then combine that with your experience of what you know they need. Also be flexible and change the content and format of the program to make sure it is current and responsive.
- I strongly suggest contacting the institutions that have developed training. Do not reinvent the wheel. Just modify it to comply with your institutional policies.
- Offer refreshments. Consider the hottest topics at your location, gear up for that. Make it a good time to gather and allow for gripes, but not the whole program!
- It will take commitment from senior and academic administration to implement departmental research administration support.
- Seen as part of professional development; point out transferable skills; offer opportunities to apply new knowledge.

- Depends. First, you should get a "KSA" inventory on each person. Perhaps giving a "pre-test" of sorts to get a sense of what they already know and tailor a training course(s) to fit beginner, intermediate and advanced. For instance, someone with PUI experience where we do it all may be intimidated by a College of Engineering type of department. Solid communication skills are essential in any RA position.
- No, but would be greatly interested in putting a program together.
- Support from the top is needed. We have not been able to institute this type of training program because there is an expectation that support staff "cannot leave their desk."
- Keep it up even with low participation!
- It's going to be situational because each PUI is a different beast. I think that our system is smart, but we have very low attendance.

CONCLUSION

The data gathered suggest a need for training-focused workshops. However, concerns expressed about meeting the more in-depth needs of faculty should be considered in future workshop planning. In addition, consideration of recommendations from workshop attendees may increase departmental participation. Other more

cost-effective measures are also available via detailed checklists that can be distributed electronically to cover various grant-related issues such as hiring processes for GA's, travel requirements, and inventory issues.

Despite the benefits of conducting training workshops, until support staff are able to assist with grant-related issues at the departmental level, concerns about overburdened SPO staff will continue to be expressed. There are other roadblocks to establishing effective training and compliance workshops, which include the development of the programs themselves. In creating a program that can meet the needs of departmental personnel from backgrounds that range from computer science to art history, the problem then becomes workshops that are general enough to be helpful yet not so general that they do not fulfill the needs of any single department.

“Despite the benefits of conducting training workshops, until support staff are able to assist with grant-related issues at the departmental level, concerns about overburdened SPO staff will continue to be expressed.”

Regardless of the benefits, costs, and concerns in developing training for departmental personnel, the data gathered indicate that the need is extensive, since a majority of PUI universities do not offer this service. Consequently, support personnel are left without the knowledge and training needed to adequately fulfill the responsibilities of their university's grants and research activities. The result has been an increasing dependence upon central offices with diminishing funding and faculty who must rely on departmental support staff, creating a cycle of needless roadblocks to the maximum productivity in grant/research endeavors.

Note: For future studies in this area, insightful information about changes in research administration can be found in Atkinson (2002), Bogdanski (2010), Chun (2010), Cole (2010), Gentry (2010), Grimshaw (2009), Molfese et al. (2008), Mullen & Teague (2008), Southwick (2006), and Wimsatt & Langley (2009).

LITERATURE CITED

- Atkinson, T. N. (2002). The institutional construction and transformation of university research administration. *Research Management Review*, 12(2), 1–7.
- Bogdanski, V. (2010). It's support not service. *NCURA Magazine*, 42(5), 42–43.
- Boyer, P., & Cockriel, I. (1998). Factors influencing grant writing: Perceptions of tenured and nontenured faculty. *SRA Journal*, 29(4), 61–68.
- Carr, C. E., McNicholas, J. C., & Miller, R. R. (2009). Faculty perceptions of research, scholarly, and creative activity and grant seeking at a predominantly undergraduate institution. *Research Management Review*, 17(1), 69–84.
- Chun, M. B. J. (2010). Building a research administration infrastructure at the department level. *Journal of Research Administration*, 41(3), 77–84.
- Chun, M. B. J. (2010). Expanding the research of the departmental administrator through publishing. *NCURA Magazine*, 42(5), 28–29.
- Cole, S.S. (2010). Reframing research administration. *Journal of Research Administration*, 41(1), 11–21.
- Decker, R. S., Wimsatt, L., Trice, A. G., & Konstan, J. A. (2007). *A profile of federal-grant administrative burden among Federal Demonstration Partnership faculty: A report of the faculty standing committee of the Federal Demonstration Partnership*. Federal Demonstration Partnership Web site: <http://thefdp.org/Faculty%20burden%20survey%20report.pdf>
- Evans, L. (2011). What research administrators need to know about researcher development: Towards a new conceptual model. *Journal of Research Administration*, 42(1), 15–37.
- Gentry, L., Pacheco, C. (2010). Departmental & central administration: Critical roles and communication. *NCURA Neighborhoods Online Chat*. NCURA web site: http://www.ncura.edu/content/regions_and_neighborhoods/neighborhoods/online_chat/docs/CommunicationChat042110.pdf
- Grimshaw, S., & Wilson I. (2009). Establishing user needs – A large-scale study into the requirements of those involved in the research process. *Journal of Research Administration*, 40(1), 32–48.
- Kean, S. (2006). Scientists spend nearly half their time on administrative tasks, survey finds. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 14, A23.
- Lampson, S., & Porter, K. (2011). Training and retaining your research administration staff – Best practices from Hamilton Health Sciences. *NCURA Magazine*, 43(10), 59.
- Lintz, E. M. (2008). A conceptual framework for the future of successful research administration. *Journal of Research Administration*, 39(2), 68–80.
- Molfese, V., Chronister, L., Kulakowski, E.C., Slocum, J.M., Studman, C., & Waugaman, P. (2008). Voice of experience the strategic planning process: Applications to research

- universities and predominantly undergraduate institutions. *Journal of Research Administration*, 39(1), 85–92.
- Mote, C. D., Jr., (2011). Strategic issues facing public universities. *NCURA Magazine*, 43(10), 2.
- Mullen, C. A., Murthy, U., & Teague, G. (2008). Listening to those we serve: Assessing the research needs of university faculty. *Journal of Research Administration*, 39(1), 10–31.
- Robertson, L., & Zipkin, S. (2011). Tips on hiring, training and developing departmental research administrators. *NCURA Magazine*, 43(10), 11.
- Southwick, S. J. (2006). The role of external grants in faculty development at predominantly undergraduate institutions. *NCURA Magazine* (September/October), 18–19.
- Stanley, S. L., Jr., & McCartney, D. A. (2009). Balancing the burden of compliance and faculty support. *Research Management Review*, 16(2), 14–21.
- Tapscott, D., & Williams, A. D. (2010). The future of education: Reboot required. CBC News interview with Tapscott: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/story/2010/08/11/f-school-tapscott.html>
- Wimsatt, L., Trice, A., & Langley, D. (2009). Faculty perspectives on academic work and administrative burden: Implications for the design of effective support services. *Journal of Research Administration*, 40(1), 71–89.
-

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Beryline Temples is a Senior Sponsored Programs Administrator at the University of Central Arkansas. She has worked in the public university setting at a predominantly undergraduate institution for over 22 years and has been in research administration 17 of those years. Her B.S. is in business administration and M.S. in training systems from the University of Central Arkansas. She is an active member of the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) and for the past 12 years has served in various positions as a regional officer and on several regional and national committees; she was selected for and recently completed the NCURA 2012 Executive Leadership Program.

Paula Simons is an undergraduate psychology major at the University of Central Arkansas. She is the current president of the UCA Psychological Society and the program director for the Arkansas Symposium for Psychology Students, a conference aimed at offering undergraduate students an opportunity to present their research. Ms. Simons is a member of Psi Chi, the International Honors Society for Psychology Students, as well as Alpha Chi, a National College Honors Society.

Tim Atkinson is Assistant Provost and Director of the Sponsored Programs Office and Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies at the University of Central Arkansas. Dr. Atkinson has contributed broadly to research administration scholarship theory and practice and to scholarship in other areas such as semiotics and research ethics pedagogy. His office oversees

pre-award grant submissions, research compliance, technology transfer, and research policy. He has been in the research field over 20 years and has served at a broad spectrum of institutions, including medical specialty, comprehensive and regional universities. His B.S. is in biology from Tennessee Technological University; M.Ed. from Vanderbilt; and Ed.D. from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He currently serves as a Co-Chair of the Economic and Workforce Development Task Force and the advisory board for the Grants Resource Center of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.
