NURAP
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION PROFESSIONALS

The RAP Up

The NURAP Newsletter

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FOSTERING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Law and Order: Special Grants Unit

by **Jill Bockes**

Alan Paberzs and Molly Heiler

Opportunities for externally funded research are emphasized and encouraged at Northwestern University School of Law. According to Law School Dean David Van Zandt "external funding is not only monetarily beneficial, but it also sets faculty apart amidst their peers in a highly competitive forum, promotes publications, provides well deserved name recognition for both the Law School and the faculty member." The school has 38 tenured research faculty, and 11 tenure track faculty. They boast the highest number of PhD-trained faculty in the nation, with 47 percent of full-time research faculty holding social science PhDs, as ranked by U.S. News and World Report.

Because of the various research backgrounds among the faculty, the types of research they are engaged in extends beyond law and justice—into areas such as religion, economics and health. One benefit of securing external funding is that it allows them to reduce their teaching hours and focus on research.

Onboard to help secure such funding is newly recruited Faculty Research Administrator Molly Heiler, hired in August, 2009. Heiler has been working closely with faculty to pair them with foundations offering grants to aid in their research endeavors. She says some are unaware that there are granting organizations whose missions closely align with their goals. "Their eyes light up when they find there are matches," she said.

Heiler spends her days helping prepare proposals and budgets, working alongside OSR. She identifies grant opportunities, often with the help of university Foundation Relations. As a member of Northwestern's InfoEd Proposal Development Working Group, she provides her insight on research administration from the law school's point of view. She is also busy developing a website for faculty to use as a grant resource.

Accordingly, the relationships the law school maintains with foundations are extremely important, noted Alan Paberzs, Budget Analyst for the Bluhm Legal Clinic since August of 2005. About 25 percent of Bluhm's operating budget comes from grants, which amounts to 1.5 – 1.7 million dollars annually. Part of that money goes to supporting clinical work by faculty who are engaged in policy and legal advocacy issues. But a portion is also used for research. He says of the law school "the culture towards research is changing, especially toward research funding." Paberzs is engaged in what he calls "strategic funding" in which he concentrates on building strong relationships with foundation boards, deemed crucial to securing funding.

The law school's grant funding comes from such foundations as the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and Ford Foundation. The Pritzker Legal Research Center was named in honor of a gift from Chicago's well known philanthropic Pritzker family. The law school currently has one National Science Foundation grant, awarded in June 2009 to Dr. Lee Epstein for the research and creation of a database that tracks all Supreme Court decisions from 1793-1946. Though other schools within the university have sought outside funding for decades, grant funding is relatively new to the law school. "It was pretty much non-existent up until the last 20 years," Heiler noted.

From the Editor

by **Krista Galvin**

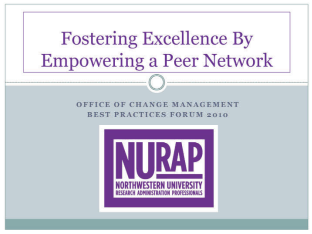
The NURAP Steering Committee and Programming ad-hoc members are very excited about featuring NCURA programming in the upcoming months. NURAP has purchased a series of videos and live events and we are looking forward to sharing the content with the NURAP membership and wider university research community.

Speaking of new content, I hope you all are enjoying the expanded content in this edition of The Rap Up. Thank you to all of our feature reporters and special contributors!

NURAP has been busy hosting its monthly NURAP at NOON series. In March, **Ruth Allee, Dir. of Training Grants Support,** presented on institutional training grants focusing on pre-award aspects. In April, **Jamie Young, Assoc. Dir. OSR Chicago,** presented on distinguishing between a subcontract and a consulting agreement. In May, **Jennifer Wei, Manager of Cost Studies & Effort Reporting,** presented on advanced effort reporting issues based on questions submitted by members. A BIG thank-you goes to all of our presenters!

NURAP at the Best Practices Forum

by **Frank Cutting**



In January a call went out soliciting presentations for the 2010 Best Practices Forum. NURAP submitted a presentation, titled "NURAP: Fostering Excellence by Empowering a Peer Network at NU". We were selected to be one of eight presentations given over the daylong event. Groups from WCAS, FSM, KSM, Medill and NUIT rounded out the program. Over lunch, Jeff Miller, COO of FSM spoke about the FSM financial model and how providing incentive pay has resulted in enhanced faculty performance on several measures including increased sponsored project proposal submission.

The program ended with a challenge by Provost Linzer to the group to continue to identify and implement best practices in our areas, and to share successful ones with the university community. Be sure to visit the Best Practices E-Forum website at http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/initiatives/eforum/ for more information on the forums, or to submit a best practice suggestion of your own.

Our two talks were well attended, and we were able to make several contacts which will result in at least two partnering events in FY11. Our plans for organizing study sections for people wishing to take the CRA exam, organizing a Research Administration Retreat, and leveraging the value of the NCURA-TV series were well received. It was clear from feedback that a professional organization for people working in research administration is a welcomed arrival, and has been needed for some time.

We expect NURAP will be a valuable partner in Northwestern's quest for the Highest Order of Excellence goals. After all, a world-class research enterprise requires world-class customer service, and that can only be achieved through recruiting, training, and retaining excellent research administration professionals.

Post Award Tips

by **Nicholas Griffiths**

Most research administrators are very familiar with the full pre-award requirements of submitting grant proposals, federal or non-federal. However, the post-award aspect of managing grants can be somewhat new. Here is a tip to ease the stress of sponsored project post-award budget management:

Recently awarded NIH grants have seen moderate-to-significant cuts in both project funding and duration. If your grant has been awarded, but cut from the originally proposed budget, minor setbacks can occur. A good way to avoid major setbacks is to create an internal, detailed budget in the pre-award phase. This internal, detailed budget can be easily referenced and adjusted to reflect a reduced award budget, allowing for a quicker budget revision and easier account reconciliation. Principal investigator effort may be reduced (if allowed within the guidelines of the sponsor's terms and conditions) and supplies and other consumables costs may also be cut, while still maintaining the project's goals and aims.

A clear and concise internal pre-award budget is a helpful tool when dealing with reductions in the awarded budget or duration period. A few extra steps in the pre-award stage can assist greatly with any budgetary reductions for awarded projects.

Department Dossier

by **Susan Morris**

In last quarter's article, I recommended that everyone have an "RA First Aid Kit." So what do you keep in it?

1. At least one budget template. Opinions are mixed on whether you should habitually use templates or always start from scratch, but since emergencies are inevitable, have at least one basic template that you're confident can produce a reasonable result in just a few minutes.

2. A library of recent bio sketches and C&P/OS. At this point I could probably cobble together a bio sketch out of a Facebook profile and some duct tape, but that doesn't mean it's a good idea.

3. Checklists for everything. When you're rushed or stressed, your brain doesn't work as well for detail-oriented tasks, whether it's completing an NCE OSR-2, reviewing a full proposal before it goes to OSR, or leaving for vacation. When I tell myself that I'm 'too busy' to use a checklist, I often find that I've neglected simple steps that could have saved me time in the long run. Surgeons and pilots aren't too busy, smart, or well-trained to use checklists, and we shouldn't be embarrassed to use them, either.

4. Cell phone numbers. Steal them off the caller ID any time an investigator calls you from off campus.

5. Actual first aid supplies. The PI might appreciate the idea that you shed blood getting their proposal out, but they don't want to see it on the face page. If your department doesn't have a stash of band-aids and Advil (for when the GM045 is literally giving you a headache), keep your own.

6. Food. I have a drawer full of Jolly Ranchers and granola bars, which come in handy when it's 3:02 on a Friday, I've forgotten to eat lunch, I have two R01s due, and I'm staring through the bars of Tech Express like one of those neglected puppies in the ASPCA commercials.

A first aid kit isn't meant to provide every supply you need for every conceivable situation, just to help with the minor bumps and bruises that don't need a doctor's attention and to provide basic assistance for the more serious injuries until help arrives. As with a medical first aid kit, check your RA supplies regularly to make sure they're restocked and up-to-date. And if you do find yourself in a situation that's over your head, be sure to light your metaphorical road flares and let someone else know you need help.

Compliance Corner

by **Katie Clarke-Myers**

Seasoned research administrators working with faculty in the social, behavioral, and health sciences are typically accustomed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission process. However for those new to research administration or working in divisions where human subjects research occurs infrequently, the rules and regulations may seem unclear. While it is always advisable to work directly with IRB staff or refer to their website when questions arise, the following is a summary that can be used to help determine if a project must undergo IRB review, and, in instances where IRB oversight is required, the categories of review which are applicable.

At Northwestern, all human subjects research, regardless of funding, requires IRB review prior to initiation. To be classified as human subjects research, the following conditions must be met. First, the individuals under study must be living; deceased persons are not considered human subjects. Second, the research must involve an interaction or intervention with said person(s) OR the research must involve the collection of individually identifiable private information. Research that uses bodily materials (for example cells, blood, urine, or tissues), residual diagnostic specimens, DNA, or medical information, which can be readily identified with individuals, is also considered human subjects research.

The categories of review for new human subjects research includes: exempt review, expedited review, and full board review. An exempt review involves certification by IRB staff, in consultation with an IRB chair, that the research is exempt from IRB purview. According to Federal Guidelines (45 CFR 46), research that presents little or no risk to human subjects and involves only non-vulnerable subject populations may be eligible for exemption. (Vulnerable populations include children, pregnant women, and prisoners.) The expedited review process, which requires only one reviewer, is appropriate when the involvement of human subjects is considered low risk. Full board reviews are required when the research activities proposed involve greater than minimal risk to the subjects, whether physical, social, psychological, or financial. Full board reviews for a new project require the participation of two board members as reviewers; the designated members evaluate all materials in the submission and present it at a convened IRB panel meeting.

For additional information about the IRB review processes, please refer to the NU OPRS website at http://www.research.northwestern.edu/oprs/irb/. The Human Subject Regulations Decision Charts, found at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/decisioncharts.htm#c4 are a valuable resource for research administrators seeking a more in-depth understanding of the material addressed in this article.

NIH Application Changes

by **Matthew Douponce**

In continuing with their initiative to improve the quality and transparency of review, the National Institutes of Health recently implemented several application changes involving grants due on or after January 25, 2010. These changes are part of an overall NIH strategy to coordinate and enhance application review criteria. Perhaps the most significant of these changes was the reduction of the page limit on the research strategy section from 25 pages to 12 pages. Coupled with the shortened page limit, NIH also introduced a new outline for the shortened research section. According to the NIH guidelines, the research strategy should be organized as follows: the significance of the research, followed by its innovation, and then finally approach and methodology.

Aside from reformatting the research strategy section, other changes to the application include: the introduction of a personal statement on the bio-sketches that describes the investigator's experience and qualifications regarding the study, a suggested limit of 15 publications, and a new emphasis on describing how the research environment will ultimately lead to the project's success.

The first major submission date incorporating the new changes was the February 5, 2010, R01 deadline. By all accounts, both the principal investigators and administrators were well versed in the changes and OSR did not encounter any unusual problems during the deadline. The March 5, 2010, amended application deadline also proved to be a success as administrators and PIs were able to reduce research strategies that were once 25 pages down to 12. Thanks to the hard work of everyone involved, the university submitted 59 NIH applications for the February 5th deadline and 31 NIH proposals for the March 5th deadline.

Looking ahead, NIH, AHRQ, and the CDC recently published a notice requesting public comments and opinions on the impact of eliminating the standard two-day error window from the Grants.gov electronic submissions. According to a *Federal Register* notice, this proposed change would be scheduled to take place within the next year. This change could have a dramatic affect on application submissions, as incorrect or uncompleted applications would no longer be processed if not submitted correctly by the actual deadline. It is important to note, however, that this policy will not affect the ability to submit a late proposal under the existing NIH Policy on Late Submission of Grant Applications.

eRA Update

by **David Hull**

As some of us are aware, Grants.gov has dominated the world of electronic research administration (ERA) for the past few years. The system was established to serve as the single portal for all grants applications to the 26 federal grant making agencies. With its well documented capacity issues, Grants.gov has presented the research community with new administrative challenges, as well as tested our patience. I am happy to report this past February Grants.gov received the "boost". This scheduled upgrade increased the capacity and reliability of the system in order to sustain a high volume of proposal submissions. In addition, Grants.gov has planned its "next generation" phase with objectives to improve the functionality and better meet the needs of its applicants and users. So be on the look-out for Grants.gov 2.0…coming soon to a `computer' near you! Please also visit the Grants.gov blog (http://grants-gov.blogspot.com/) for the latest news and updates.

Have you heard about Research.gov? Led by NSF, Research.gov is "a partnership of federal grant making agencies with a shared vision of increasing customer service for the research community, while streamlining and standardizing business processes amongst partner agencies". At Research.gov you can find Recovery Act awards made by NSF, as well as non-Recovery Act awards and spending information for NSF and NASA. You can also check on grant application status from submission to decision for NSF, USDA/CREES, and DOD/ARO. There is even an electronic policy library that consolidates Federal and agency-specific polices and guidelines. These are just a few of the great services Research.gov provides.

And do you NIHers feel left out? Keep in mind that NIH RePORTer (Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools) has replaced the retired CRISP system. This query tool retains all the features of its predecessor with a wide variety of enhancements. You can access this valuable NIH data at: http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm as well as finding all sort of NIH ERA info on NIH's recently redesigned electronic receipt site found at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt.

Enjoy the Spring!

NURAP Star: Donna Kwiatkowski

by **Rebecca Weaver-Gill**

In every issue, NURAP will feature one of its members in a piece called "NURAP Star". To nominate one of your colleagues for this piece, please contact the newsletter staff (contact information on p. 4). Video interviews (if available) are posted to the NURAP channel on YouTube.

Donna Kwiatkowski is the Research Administrator for the Initiative for Sustainability and Energy at Northwestern (ISEN). Prior to this position her career at NU has included offices in Central Administration and a College.

Q: How did you arrive in your current position?
A: I was a grant coordinator at the Medill School of Journalism. I worked with some pre-award administration, but mostly post-award.

At ISEN I am not a typical research administrator. I act more like a funding agency, which funds awards for energy and sustainability projects.

This opportunity was an avenue to create a job from the ground up as the position is new.

Q: What prompted you to take your present position?
A: I was ready for a change and knew I could contribute more to the University. I am afforded the opportunity to learn and grow almost daily. I trust and believe in the importance of ISEN's mission.

Q: What are the challenges you face in this role?
A: At first, it was difficult to explain ISEN to others. ISEN is not a department, nor a center; yet we are an initiative whose mission is funding research, offering new energy and sustainability undergraduate and graduate courses, and organizing and co-sponsoring outreach events.

ISEN itself does not do research. ISEN promotes research and aims to grow the energy and sustainability research others are doing on campus in their respective departments and centers.

Q: In what ways does this career meet needs that you have--psychological, physical, or spiritual?
A: Spiritually, I believe we are tasked to be stewards of our resources. I think that encompasses not only the natural resources-- Earth, air, and water, but also Northwestern's money, buildings, equipment, and supplies. That's why I can support ISEN—we can promote energy and sustainability. My work supports, as well as increases the visibility of these issues.

Q: How do you cope when unexpected obstacles hinder your work?
Deep breath, a little humor and forge ahead by being flexible and sometimes reprioritizing. I have been known to have a Plan B, C and D.

Q: What do you do when the workload is beginning to be too much?
A: I take a break so that I can keep things in perspective. It helps me clear my mind, clarify my thinking and refocus. I also take deep breaths and reach out to others. Working in research administration is not something you do alone, even if it feels like it. While it's the most important thing to you at the time, you have to realize that it may not be the most important assignment for someone else. The earlier you reach out to people in OSR, for example, the better off you will be.

I think a sense of humor can help break up the intensity, so I try not to lose mine.

When I feel overwhelmed, I tend to break things down into manageable portions. I also try to pace myself throughout the day to avoid burnout.

NURAP MEMBER RECOGNITION

NURAP President, **Lori Palfalvi**, and NURAP Steering Committee Member, **Elizabeth Adams,** were both finalists for Employee of the Year in Chicago and Evanston, respectively.

They along with the other Employee of the Year finalists and winners were honored at the 33rd Annual Staff Service Recognition Luncheon held on May 11 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Chicago.

The Employee of the Year award is given to NU employees who demonstrate commitment and service to the University that goes above and beyond "the call of duty." Just being nominated for Employee of the Year is a major achievement for NU staff.

Congratulations to both Lori and Elizabeth!

Dear Dan: NURAP's Advice Column

by **Dan Rademacher**

Dear Dan,

I'm an RA based at the Evanston Campus. I just received a request from an investigator for help with an NIH grant. I usually work with NSF. Do you have any tips for an NIH newbie? Are there things that I should be aware of?

-NIH Newbie

Dear NIH Newbie,

I have an old saying that the only thing that is similar between NSF and NIH is the word "national".

For starters are several things you should read
1.) National Institutes of Health Grants Policy Statement (NIHGPS) available at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps_2003/ as well as 2.) the Federal Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for which your Investigator is pursuing this will also dictate what forms are needed for the application and provide instruction for completion of the application. NIH institutes may also provide additional information such as the National Cancer Institutes' "Everything You Wanted to Know about the NCI Grants Process" http://www3.cancer.gov/admin/gab/2005GPB/GPB05-LowRes.pdf.

These materials will have you off to a great start. You also have experienced colleagues that you can consult with such as the Office for Sponsored Research and the Office of Research Development, as well as your fellow NURAP members.

NURAP will be publishing a Member Directory over the summer and you can search for someone with an expertise with NIH applications. The directory will allow people to identify mentors in areas that they may be less familiar. These mentors will be able to assist you and provide examples for you to utilize. Good luck.

Do you have a question for Dan Rademacher about research administration or life in general? Submit them to Dan Rademacher at d-rademacher2@northwestern.edu

Be sure to include the words "Dear Dan" in the subject line.

Editors reserve the right to choose questions to be published in the RAP Up.

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